

By the same Author

TOLSTOY: A STUDY

THE STORY OF THE C.W.S. (1913)

CO-OPERATION FOR ALL

THE CONSUMERS PLACE IN SOCIETY

JOHN T. W. MITCHELL

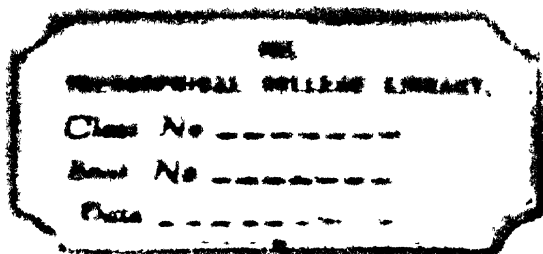
TWENTY FACES THE WORLD

THE NEW HISTORY OF THE C.W.S. (1938)

JOURNEY TO UNDERSTANDING

PERCY REDFERN

Foreword by
ALBERT MANSBRIDGE



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FOREWORD

IN order that the life of our time may be rightly understood it is essential that men and women who have especially shared the impulses of the period should record their experiences and reflections. Even the unknown diarist, never dreaming of publication, may compile a document rich in value. It is upon such material that historians can work with confidence.

"Journey to Understanding" is in form a record, but in spirit a diary. It is a veritable candelabra casting light in many directions on the industrial, social and religious character of the democratic England that was shaping its future from the late nineteenth century onward to the present day.

Clear and accurate powers of expression have enabled the author to write a story vivid enough to delight the general reader while offering material for students and thinkers.

After a schooling all but elementary, Percy Redfern went away from home at the end of his fourteenth year to earn his living in a draper's shop. The surroundings of a mining township adjoining an industrial and county centre aided a contact with societies and movements. A born reader and student, and possessed of a literary ability which during his boyhood, almost in despite of himself, had appeared in a contribution to a Leicester sports journal, he now discussed with local secularist leaders and contributed to "The Free-thinker." A counter assistant in a vegetarian store, a minor commercial traveller, a money lender's clerk, ultimately he rescued himself by gaining entry to the offices of the Co-operative Wholesale Society as a desk clerk. His bent now recognised, finally, he became managing editor of that great society's publications, and also its notable historian, serving until the end of his sixty-third year in 1938.

It was an adventurous and unprejudiced way of life, during which he seems to have been persistently seeking, even when he was less

conscious of the search, a transcendent loveliness beyond what was immediately to be found in his working environment. His eye caught "the light that never was on sea or land." His critical mind, whilst it may have taken him into devious paths, and even slowed his journey, did not hinder it.

So the secularist of 1893-4 became the Labour Church speaker, then the Tolstoyan and secretary of the Manchester Tolstoy Society, and, after ten years, an exponent of Christianity, in the *Clarion* controversy of those years. His economic thinking, in future was not to be disassociated from the Christian claims upon this sad and yet lovely world.

In all his work he was greatly helped and encouraged by his marriage in 1905. In happy family life, with the help of an able and devoted wife, he was able to approach matters with larger vision than if he had remained a solitary pilgrim.

To make an end, "Journey to Understanding" reveals much that is intimate in trade unionism and socialism, in co-operation, and in religion, which cannot be found in other books simply because active participation, together with philosophic insight were needed for discovery and assessment.

Few will agree with all Redfern's conclusions, but honest thinking for human good cannot be denied. It reveals itself no less in the author's pacific attitude to war. Here is a book for the persistent citizen, whose chosen city is "Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land," and who yearns for the time when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

ALBERT MANSBRIDGE.

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STARS AND A BOY

I

Two men sat at breakfast in a provincial hotel. They sat immediately behind me, and I was enveloped by their vigorous conversation. Until one-thirty that morning they had been held from bed by a smokeroom, philosophic discussion. The older of the two men repeated his contribution.

"What are we living for?" he said. "Why are we here? What is the purpose of our lives?"

"Nobody," he continued, "has answered that question. No book that I have heard of has faced it. To work properly, a man should know the purpose of his work, that is, why he lives and works at all; but who does know it? There was one woman, Joan of Arc, who believed she knew what she had come into the world for; and she did her job. But how can we be efficient when we are all in the dark? We can't! So we can't live efficiently!"

I listened, not unwillingly. The meaning of life was the question that had become explicit for me during years of groping for truth. From the height and depth of the final answer I had taken shelter in those ordinary affairs which hide, for many of us, the ultimate things—or at least their urgency. Yet I had not forgotten the search. However meanly content to keep it to myself, I could claim an understanding. I had a story to tell. "No book has faced it." I knew how hard it would be for me to produce any sort of book on such a subject that would not be still-born. Still, I would begin the task.

II

The whole problem is in the contradictions of life; and, externally, contradiction met me at birth. Procreation is an act of instinctive faith in life; and the Victorian faith was such that, in 1875, four babies entered England and Wales where only two would arrive now. We entered amidst the gales, wrecks, colliery disasters, fires, epidemics, bread riots and battles recorded in the *Annual Register*; and where my tiny voice arose there was another and more intimate clash. In this vexed world a new-born baby is both a challenge and a means of escape. My arrival brought only a

troubled joy. Safe deliverance increased the burden of the youngest daughter of a proudly Nonconformist and puritan family. In the unmarried mother, the pain of abasement and the ache for redemption overwhelmed the gladness. She would have been content if mother and son had died together; but the wish for obliteration was submerged when she fought with illness for the baby's life. A few months afterwards, to free the child from stigma and from the poverty that a failure in trade had brought upon her family, she surrendered the boy to his father. I went back to the widower's house in Leicester that my mother had kept. At last another mother appeared, sufficiently kind and good. I was told nothing; but the problem of my unmentioned origin vaguely stirring in me at the age of twelve or so, caused no more than a passing perplexity.

It was to be a lesser mystery. Awake or dormant in the two thousand million persons of the world is the riddle of oneself. If trees, fish, birds, animals are not self-aware, why are we? We, too, are not self-made. We are in and of the order of the visible universe, each of us a detail in that vast totalitarianism. Born into families, we live through childhood by family care, and are fed, clothed, instructed as members of society in an organised civilisation. Regarded from outside, mankind presents no reason why that which is of the earth and must return to earth should not be entirely comprehended by nature and society.

The self is the different and enigmatical thing. Is it not a new thing? What was it to be a baby, reposing under splendours of smiles and beams, gurgling and sucking toes fit to suck? What is remembered of those desolations of the night, of that content in resting on the stomach and mumbling a fist, of that first, laughing joyousness at the sight of scarlet flowers or in hearing the jangling 'of a bunch of keys? Memory can tell us nothing; she is not so old.

Despite those ancient struggles to raise the back, to sit up, and perilously to stand erect, despite, too, those characteristics and likenesses distinguishing each of us from birth for the seeing eye, these first months and years are as unknown in our inner being as are the ages when we were not.

Kind is separate from kind, each with its own laws of being; and in us this same differentiation is so far advanced that it knows itself, and we grow to be individual, personal, secret and alone. Even in childhood, each of us is the recipient of impressions new and strange. We can say, this happened to me; and after sixty, seventy, eighty years it will be something original and fresh.

III

So it was I who, perhaps sixty-five years ago, found myself looking into fond eyes, knowing them to be kind, and myself obstinate against response. It was I (later) who was unclean, and stood waiting for judgment, weakly miserable; and I who sat perched on a high chair at a shop counter trying to recollect what it was that I had to buy. An amused shopman suggests sugar. Uneasy, I feel that they always suggest sugar, and sugar is always wrong; but I cannot stay on the chair, and I agree to sugar. It was I—given a seat on the grandstand to see a great procession escorting a Prince of Wales—who was led to look forward to “the Buffaloes walking,” and who was disgusted at this point by nothing wilder than a parade of dull, elderly men, hardly enlivened by their Friendly Society ribbons. These memories, I know, are of a normal type. I was the ordinary boy, who knocks at doors and runs away and is caught, who suffers all the dreariness of boredom hour after hour when minding younger children, and whose greed would disgrace the family at a party tea unless he were previously well-filled with plain bread and butter!

I was ordinary in my fears. How secure must they be who are grown up and may act without fear of punishment! How miserable to be out at night alone, a mile from a town, with lightning playing on a dark sea, and that melancholy rattle of wave-sucked shingle so near and around! How frightening to be alone again, and again in darkness, but this time on a Leicester suburban road at a point away from houses, while a man, a stranger, paces alongside, quietly offering five shillings for assistance in obscene acts of which I knew nothing except that here was something from which I must escape! But was I common or less than common in my small thefts? I stole apples, and (once) biscuits, from a box displayed in a shop. In this act I am detected. The shopman, a severe, bearded man, very quietly tells me to put the biscuits back. Still I can see the condemnation in the shopman’s eyes, in his whole, frowning, terrible face. I am dumbly, horribly ashamed. The man behind the counter was honest, and I was dishonesty rebuked.

Boyhood is a separate world, a remote, isolated country of tyrants and victims, a state in which class is decided by years rather than by possessions. It is a cruel, but, also, a splendid land, never barren in schoolday companionships and in friendships richer for having begun with fights, a land, too, of mysterious clubs and brotherhoods, of unfailing seasons for games, of adventures at dawn and dusk by summer streams and on winter snows. But I cannot stay there. I can only visit and bring away a few things to my purpose, evidences

of an awakening mind: the sense of freshness in a soft winter morning on grass and running water; the pleasure of the dry, firm earth in spring; a memory of East Coast cobbles lifting and swaying on a sparkling tide; a dumb sense of beauty in the green and white foaming of a Derbyshire stream, unforgotten though seen only for a moment from a railway carriage window; and, amidst the sweat of cricket, a new, deep feeling of peace, detaching me from the game, as strong, evening sunshine slants across a hard brown road and is yellow on a width of grass.

IV

At thirteen I was still buying with my pennies violent stories in crudely-coloured wrappers; and what I brought home from the public library was "The Headless Horseman." When I earned a place in print, with editorial commendation, in a "Leicester Saturday Journal," it was with a comic cricket story. The boyish mind at work plainly needed to be improved. I was directed to read scientific, informative books. Skirting that dark continent, dubiously, I found beckoning me the popular and romantic introductions to astronomy of R. A. Procter. For the first time in my life, it seemed, I looked at the stars. Venus shone in the blue evening, a whole world above the sunset, a globe lovely to the eye and marvellous to the mind. When autumn came I stared at the luminous, silent river of the Milky Way, and at the jewels in the belt of Orion, each jewel a sun. Or, not now afraid to be alone in the quiet streets, yet awed and stirred, I watched a thousand meteors burn and vanish. Amidst the softer beauty of another clear night, the splendour of a full moon made the lights of a main road and its last shops seem garish and mean.

I was held less by the facts I had read than by the wonder of the universe, thus seen afresh. Shops and lamps were not romantic like the Charnwood hills and the Flamborough seas; while this loveliness and mystery above me, in which I seemed to walk, included the earth and all its magnificence, and was so much the grander. Imagination rose to the sky, while the rest of me trudged up that main road mechanically.

Astronomers are now cautious about promising inhabited worlds. No one can deny them to the galaxies which have so multiplied that universe on which I gazed; but within our range none is probable. It was different in the year 1889. Mars had its canals; and beyond that hopeful sphere there was nothing to discourage imagination from roaming an infinitely-peopled universe. It was a journey that at once took me away from the Bible. I was not compelled to read

either testament; and except that I was like other boys in disliking church-going, I was not specially and suddenly obliged to fall out with the book of Genesis. But because I saw no earth-centred cosmos, no skies that could make a heaven, and stars that were no lesser lights, the whole Bible stood discredited. The works of the human-like giant were imaginary, and so was the giant himself. There was no God.

This rejection I maintained. On the Sunday of a seaside holiday when sand-games were barred, the denial of God at least was a valid reason for refusing to go to church. I was called "a little heathen," and, more considerably, an attempt was made to instruct me concerning a "great architect of the universe." But Deism left me untouched. Hours of pain from burns after an accident drove me back to prayer; but there was no real change of thoughts. At school, in the daily walk homeward, I had urged atheism upon my companions. They had been neither shocked nor greatly interested. If they continued to listen it was for the excitement of discussing certain current prophecies of a coming end to the world. No one but myself felt it to be necessary to seek exemption from school prayers. So I stood alone by the headmaster's desk, while he, a keen churchman, leaned forward in his seat, his blue eyes searching mine.

"Have you been reading atheistic books?"

"No, sir."

"Will you come to my room and talk it over?"

"No, sir . . . I'd rather not."

Those beliefs belonged to me. There was another master who would walk a few yards with any group of us whom he might overtake on his way home. With him I could have forgotten school relationships, but not with a distant Head whose cane the palm of my hand remembered.

However, my oddity was respected. Given a special monitorial duty, I was allowed to remain in the entrance hall during prayers. Through the glass panels of a door I saw the sunshine descending like a benediction on the ranks of devout faces, and heard the voices rising in unison. The picture remained; but so did the disbelief.

V

By this time I was nearing fourteen. At Christmas, schooldays were to end. What understanding of life that a boy could possess had they given me, or what aids to understanding? The heresies were my own. What had I received from my teachers?

Through some zeal for experiment, particularly in an inexpensive

direction, my nine years at the elements had meant eight different schools. To the maiden ladies in a dignified, three-storey house overlooking the Leicester Museum Gardens, I owed my ability to read improbable tales of the Wild West at seven years of age. The one-man school that followed I remembered only for the spectacle of an older boy not unsuccessfully fighting with the master before us all. Twopence a week (in 1883) paid the dues at the next, a Church school from which I came home kicking my cap along the street. I was translated to a North London boarding school which must have been still cheaper in its kind. Boys ran away and were recaptured and caned on bare buttocks before the school; lesson hours echoed our fights over the Boat Race (of which we knew nothing) and economies in bath water spread a skin disease. London cheats a small boy. The suburban place-names are rich in "parks," "greens" and "woods"; but the real country is ever round the corner. At the Nottinghamshire, country Grammar School which soon followed, in the youngest of the three classes simultaneously held in the one schoolroom, I learned little more than in London; yet, living there, I was shown Old England. I felt the deep quiet of fields, rural and remote as few are now; while, less touched by them, I accepted primrose lanes, Birket Foster cottages, a May Day in the squire's grounds, a Meet near Sherwood Forest and the forest itself, the woodland bathing place on the Idle, the village fair, and (superb events!) the village fixtures with the old cricketing enemy, six miles away. Moreover, I learned the polka step, and might have added much more had I dared to approach the young ladies who joined us from their school once a week. I learned, too, dirty parodies of hymns softly noised in the dormitory after lights out, parodies which I am sorry I cannot quite forget. When I went back again to twopence a week (or ninepence, later, at a new secondary school) and mixed with boys from self-respecting working class or lower middle class families, I went into a cleaner and kinder atmosphere than I had found amongst many private school pupils, more polished outside and the worse within.

The "tuppennies" were Board, now Council schools. The first was across the town from my home and temporary; and I learned by playing truant, the stolen hours being mostly spent in a public reading room. The second was new, near at hand, and a place of education. Teaching is certainly an art. Other wants were served commercially by people whom I never knew, and there were teachers no better. But educators, like poets and novelists, live on as persons Cooper, Rodgers, Jarvis, Thompson, and even White, whose lessons

were our games, with the far off, dim Miss Kimber, you (and especially Rodgers, so firm, intelligent and devoted) gave me yourselves! Fifty years on, and you remain real, individual and honourable to me, and, no doubt, to many more. That in his numerous class of boys and girls (where a girl persistently took the first prizes) the musical Rodgers would fix his eyes on the boy with the big and backward ears and tease him with the lines on the villain lacking music in himself, is something which I can now forgive.

What knowledge, then had I gained? First, a useful elementary acquaintance with English. I was taught to organise my ideas, to analyse sentences, and to understand something of the structure of words. This by the tireless Rodgers, from whom at the age of twelve I gathered a real interest in geography, and some knowledge of human physiology. Afterwards came a little chemistry and electricity, with the valuable addition to memory of passages from "Julius Caesar," which I liked, and from "The Merchant of Venice," which I did not like—by this time I had found on the floor of heaven realities more poetic and exciting than patines of bright gold. Here were endowments. Nevertheless, of what men live for, and what should be their relations to life and to one another in society and as nations, I learned nothing. There was the prescribed religiosity, a routine matter in the Board school; but that which I accepted left no impression, nor did I feel that the best teacher believed in it as he believed in music. Furthermore, except for such facts as that Liverpool was a port, and Northampton made boots, I received no understanding of daily work. Nothing was related to the life around us all, scholars and masters together.

Leicester is a town of varied industry: hosiery, shoes, printing, light engineering; and it is a county town, where professional men occupy Georgian houses in streets as quiet as in Keats' Winchester. All around is the grassy shire—within half-a-mile of where I lived the streets stopped abruptly, and the rest was unspoiled country to Norfolk and the sea. Once a year the open market place beside the Corn Exchange was spread with bright straw on which farmers piled their cheese to make stalls and counters; with wool, also, annually the country came into the town. But the farmers jogged up the London Road in the sunshine away to their homes; and the hosiery workers on strike broke an employer's windows in the same road; and none of it seemed to interest Education. Did the authorities care any more for the history written around us?—the Roman wall, the Roman bricks visible in the oldest, partly-Saxon church tower, the remains of the Abbey and the Castle, the mediaeval Old Town

Hall. The whole environment of an intricate, organic community continuous in its life through eighteen hundred or more years, was like the atmosphere, too near to be seen.

A least result was that I was left at fourteen unsure of the work I wanted to seek. No, I must not think of driving a bread cart, and to become a qualified analyst would cost too much. Of architectural routine, and the tabulation of "quantities," the son of a F.R.I.B.A. had seen enough—the South Kensington prize which I received for "scale drawing" must have come by accident! And that journals are produced by men paid for the work, was a fact which neither the printed, editorial approval of boyish effort, nor my initiation of a school magazine, had sufficed to lodge in any mind concerned. On the other hand, a local draper had added shop to shop. Such truth was eloquent. Into a draper's shop I was sent. I did not know that I was following Robert Owen, Corot and H. G. Wells. But the event had no significance except for myself, and that left-handedly, in reducing me to my place as one of the proletariat.

Chapter II

COLLIERY TOWNSHIP

I

MORE than an industrial centre, the Nottingham of my youth was a city. The Castle stood Palladian on its high rock; lifted up beyond the valley of the great Market Place, the noble church of St. Mary's responded. The amphitheatre of Lenton Park looked to Clifton Grove and the Grove to Colwick woods; below them all flowed the wide Trent.

The panorama remains, but cluttered up and dirtied now by works and smoke. It was a pleasanter town to which I went on a mild and sunny day of January, 1890; and it was a no less busy town. Not a castor-oil plant in any parlour window in all England dared peep on the world at that period except from between curtains of Nottingham lace; not one housewife dared look even into her own backyard unless over a similar border, Nottingham-made. But from the streets and the single-deck horse cars, the business seemed all unhurried, just as, later on, I so often found Shrewsbury and

Gunn to be, opening at Trent Bridge for the home county all through the midweek, timeless afternoons.

Thursday afternoons: in each week the one, precious deliverance! The other days, six and a half, belonged to the drapery, clothing and furnishing shops (or to the house over and behind the main shops) substantial along the most commanding part of the main street of the colliery and factory township four miles from the city market place. From the point of view of 1890, I was well lodged and well employed. The establishment of John Baines in "The Old Wives Tale" was not more respectably predominant in its locality than was ours. The seven assistants slept at night in comfortable beds. Butter on the family side of the common household dining table, and dripping on the side where the assistants sat, did not deny the pride of the Tory and Anglican proprietor in providing the best of food. To-day all is gone, business, proprietor, family, assistants; but everything, then, was solid and well-established. Only it was not in any way *my* table, or *my* house, or *my* proper job.

II

During a whole month no one discovered my unfitness, and my indentures were signed. The imposing, futile parchment is before me now, a square foot of it, engrossed and decorated with the royal shield, garter and crown and stamped with a one-pound stamp. It reminds me of dead treaties, and long-repudiated bond-holders' certificates. Yet worse British documents (where English is unknown) have served for passports.

The text described me as bound of my own free will, and it is true that at fourteen I did not run away. Indeed, the commission to stand on the private side of the shop counters seemed to me to be novel and important. But the first weeks of the four 'prentice years were enough for ending this illusion. The floors of the furniture warehouse were counterless; nevertheless, in handling these more robust goods there was a greater satisfaction. However, I was not allowed to choose. Where the indenture had spoken of the art of drapery and furnishing equally, there had been no footnote to explain that the equality would be governed in practice by the superior importance of the drapery business and the six-to-one manpower over my labour of the drapery and clothing staff. It was a lesson, if I had understood it, in the general operation of legal rights.

Gradually I submitted. Drapery counters were dusty and dull, but worse jobs existed. One Spring day I assisted in fixing blinds at

a local lace factory. All day the Jacquard looms crashed in my ears. Never had a natural life seemed so sweet as when outdoors in the evening I listened, in stillness, to the birds. The factory had been as stuffy as the shop, while the operatives were bound to these relentless machines. The shop demanded sixty-eight hours weekly; and every Saturday was three days long, morning, afternoon, and the weary stretch to eleven at night. Nevertheless, there was gain in freedom from machines. The old-fashioned business included every duty; and whether I was helping with the windows (lugging a waxen effigy of a bearded Prince of Wales, democratic in a ready-made suit) or helping to mark-off goods, or allowed by a dying tradition to be the gallery for the most favoured of all the free, jovial commercial travellers who came as super-men from a larger world, nothing that I did was mechanical. Yet I was not satisfied. Ignoring the massive indenture, I wrote letters in search of other employment until, by chilling replies, every door was closed.

III

Meanwhile, the boy who had seen the night skies found a living interest outside the shop. New and strange to him were the latticed towers and crowning wheels standing above the coal pits to the north and west. Romantic, too, were the blast furnaces beyond the gorse-lit common; glowing clouds rested over them in glory. These were masterful works, occupied not with buttons and curtain-net but with the rocks of the earth and with liquid fire. To-day I want to see England cleansed from industrial grime, but in 1890 I was unconscious of the dirt and saw only a beauty, rough yet proud. Masters of my gaze, also, were the swart colliers tramping in hundreds past the shop-windows, their nailed boots hammering the pavements.

I was a novice, still, when news of a cage accident, and three men dead, went like a wind through every street of the town. It was the early-closing day; but during the afternoon the proprietor admitted a new widow to buy crape; and I assisted. Empty counters stretched to the closed and shuttered public door; except for the three of us, all the space was silent and empty; and we were hushed, doing the business starkly. When the husband of the mute and rigid widow and his work-mates were buried it was different; for the whole town followed to the churchyard up the hill; and by its silence the crowded hillside spoke.

We sold "moleskin" trousers to the miners' wives; and collecting weekly payments we followed "club" members into their homes where husbands stood stripped to the waist for each after-shift wash.

When a local strike came, we were not above the battle. Dressing a window we noticed with excitement how solidarity was shown by each hewer carrying home his pick, his patent pick, sold from our furnishing store. The strike extended, and a community of a dozen pit populations marched past the windows, each contingent behind its own band and banner. The unionism extended. Two years later, in 1893, one coal war joined the Midlands with Lancashire and Yorkshire. This event was serious. Month after month, the shop stood half-empty or even quite empty, while the little Market Place adjacent was turbulently full. In the dark of the evenings, after eight o'clock, I packed myself with the crowd, while socialist lecturers simplified everything. Eloquent hands pictured the round cake of the national income. The workers made it; the capitalists and landlords took it. One slice only, a mere third, they gave back to the workers, just to keep their slaves alive! Thus did Marxian doctrine and Fabian diagrams reach the people.

Outside the organised economy contributed to by other than manual workers, I was as inconsiderable a cake-maker as any pit-boy near me; yet the image sank in. Still, I was not on strike, and not a good hater, and the infuriating power of the doctrine passed me by.

It was not this caricature, with its kernel of bitter half-truth, that Margaret McMillan brought to the market place. She came with a vision of health, joy and beauty in working lives, to be demanded and created by the people themselves. Twenty years later, as a journalist, I was able to visit Margaret MacMillan's pioneer, open-air school in Deptford, and see her dream embodied. Now it passed over our massed heads. We listened with respect, touched by something vaguely, unattainably fine; and then we went back to the strike.

Rumours supplemented speeches. Owners were breaking away. Concessions would be made. "Time enough with children clemming!" "But Bestwood's got blacklegs! Now, when we're winning! The bloody scabs!"

Anger flamed in the market place, and hastily we put up our shutters, hardly anticipating the mob that came in waves along the main street, "Scottie," a bull-necked avenger of workers' wrongs, shouting the colliers on. In the darkness, trucks of supposedly new-won coal were overturned and burned; and next morning, many of the younger men met in the same market place, each armed with some sort of club. Finally they marched out, along another road,

to a more distant pit, and wild stories came back of mine officials hunted from the pit-bank and pit-gear burned. Stemming the torrent, gathering their men together, the local trade union leaders, earnest Methodists, steadily preached patience and order; but before their good sense could be effectual a company of dragoons was quartered near at hand. Every morning the mounted and fully-armed soldiers jangled past the shop; and violence was repressed, while the dispute proceeded sullenly to its end.

The drama was at our doors; yet we were separated from it by more than plate-glass. We were not amongst the masses of colliers noisy in the twenty public houses of the little town on Saturday nights. If they were "twopennies" at a visiting show the lowest of us was a "fourpenny." Above us assistants were those not to be found at any such cheap entertainment: the Wesleyan and Baptist lesser tradespeople, and the silk-hatted, Sunday gentlemen, and the silken, Sunday ladies walking away from the caps and scarves of the market place loungers, and mounting with dignity to the parish church. And even the upper layer had its strata. From the one-shop milliner to the M.P.S., from him to the gentleman manufacturer, and still onwards to the carriage party of the Hall—so the series climbed.

The milliner possessed her own business. We were not so established. So our range was from superior, "butty" (foremen) miners up to the gay, socialistic teacher who was the spare-time public librarian. Of all who came into the shop he alone stood for the joy of life. Marvellously free, during his tremendous holidays, a month at a time, he cycled far to north and south. Apprenticed and no more than adolescent, the best I could do was to turn from "Answers" to the "Clarion." To me, as to thousands of working people awake and mentally hungry, the "Clarion" medley of whatever most appealed to Robert and Montague Blatchford, E. F. Fay (soon to die) and Alexander Thompson was to come week by week as a message of life and joy. Blatchford wrote and reprinted his famous, socialist letters to John Smith, of Oldham, gathered under the title of "Merrie England." Reading steadily I began to reflect on competitive window-dressing, on duplicated stocks, on all the apparent waste that seemed to end in nothing but long hours, low wages and insecurity. For bad trade, I saw, could ruin a man, despite the diligence which in theory always brought success. I did not think of miners or their wives. It was for shop workers that a notion of municipal stores and happy assistants now formed itself for me.

IV

But the main journey of this period was along another road. Every Sunday morning and evening, especially during the first year or two, that "little heathen" the apprentice was to be deemed an Anglican, and go to church. Perversely, perhaps, one could prove compulsory church-going by unbelievers to be quite as desirable a sacrifice for an assumed communal benefit as the secular sacrifices imposed by the modern state. Freedom is often reckoned as the right to do that which accords with the popular will, and not as the liberty to act of and from oneself. Overshadowed by the legal contract, the boy did nothing to continue that liberty of conscience he had claimed at school and had received. I went to church. And it was not simply as the result of a rebellious spirit that I was bored.

What was there in the services that was living? More than in old pictures, much that would have meaning and beauty for me now. But I was too young for Old Masters. Besides, the first rector was aged and mumbled to his beard. A successor used a rich and sonorous voice in being melodramatic about the great white throne. There were curates. One discoursed on sins of *oh*-mission and sins of *coh*-mission. Another was pale and saintly, but his abstractions passed me by. A third was rotund, and he waved his arms and talked of angels flying. Rarely was I touched. There was that warm, sunlit day when the open door of the undistinguished edifice brought in the very spirit of summer, to sing freshly with the young choristers:

The flowers are strewn in field and copse, on the hill and
on the plain,

Thy name, Lord, be adored!

The soft air stirs the tender leaves that clothe the trees again:
Glory to the Lord!

There came another remembered day when another fatal accident somewhere deep down under the church itself, broke through rote and ritual to speak with reality from the pulpit. But with these two occasions the refreshing memories end.

The older assistants could be nonconformist, and after twelve months I took the same liberty. I was disappointed. Ministers in plain clothes echoed the surpliced priests. Followed home from the market place, even the Salvation Army lost its originality. Only the Primitive Methodist chapel was better. There the collier deacons were hearty, and student-preachers from the college in Nottingham

evidently were interested in the actual world and the affairs of the day. Still seeking I went into Nottingham, to a famous Unitarian church, and discovered how fixed, sedate and orthodox in manner heresy could be! To an extent these were still forced excursions. During the hours of service no assistant might remain comfortably by the assistants' sitting-room fire. So I descended to sheer truancy. Slipping away from all worshippers under cover of the churchyard wall, in summer I wandered where the larks rose from the gorge-bright heath. In winter, though the streets were filled with cold slush, and lumps of wet snow in the darkness fell lugubriously from the roofs, I trod the desolation, utterly forlorn. At this far end of the borough the Nottingham authorities maintained a public reading room. But adult education had not begun. Albert Mansbridge in London was no older than I; a few miles away D. H. Lawrence was a child of seven. The township possessed no clubs, no dramatic societies, no classes, no lectures; and cinemas were not yet invented. Sufficient for the townsmen were pits, factories, a quarry, a pottery, cottages, shops, public houses and churches. And, under the reading room, a police station. A light on Sunday nights, a lamp before the Law, relatively cheerful, burned in the police entrance. But all above the stairs was dark. I passed and repassed, shut out from a Sunday hospitality for misdemeanants only.

Of deceit in the absences from church, if they did deceive, I was little conscious. Duty to truth was not amongst the many duties named in the indentures. In the shop, by authority, a piece of calico could be divided, and one-half the length would be marked a halfpenny dearer. The customer who felt both halves and found the dearer to be the better, was allowed to pay for her faith. It was customary, also, to exaggerate or invent reductions of price during "sales," and to lay in "surplus" stock. In personal matters the proprietor responsible for these traditional cheats was fair and candid above the average. The fact that competition compelled him to sell the cheaper cottons normally at cost, and custom in the other cases, permitted him to be as little troubled by his deceptions as I was by my own pretences. Yet already I had decided that real lying did not pay. Concealment doubled every liability. If I was in the wrong, or had caused damage, a frank admission was cheaper in the end.

This was Truth in her utility clothes; but I wanted her in splendour, Truth herself. I was sixteen when I read "We Two," that generous plea for Charles Bradlaugh by the popular Victorian

novelist, "Edna Lyall." For the first time I heard of an atheistic organisation. Somehow I discovered that Nottingham held a branch of the National Secular Society, and a Secular Hall. Flying swallows had decorated the cover of "Merrie England"; and flying swallows, this time in colour, adorned the branch secretary's notepaper. What they promised was summer indeed. With one fellow-worker I could share the secret. Three years—which was then one-fifth—older than myself, she claimed the position of elder sister; and a friendship entirely within a fraternal relationship outlasted her marriage and continued until her death nearly fifty years later. Together we stood one Sunday in a Nottingham east-end street of shops, at the foot of a flight of gas-lit stone steps. On the wall, a poster in yellow and black was headed, "We seek for truth." Did I not seek it, too!

The commonplace bill and the drab, empty steps shone romantically bright.

Waiting for an audience in what was to become a familiar manner, across the meeting room at the stair-head a few men stood around a bookstall. To welcome a double accession led by one who was already a woman, tall and dignified, the nearest figure jumped towards us. We were received! And for me it seemed the end of a pilgrimage. Here was a conventicle of my choice.

V

Now began another apprenticeship. It was a novitiate of years under the lecturing Lollards, Levellers and Diggers of the time, the secularist, heretically Christian, pantheist, socialist, anarchist-communist and other, perhaps remote, descendants of Piers Plowman. We were, no doubt—for I followed to the platform—raw material for caricature; yet we spoke for a permanent England and one that has occupied history. It is an England which drama, poetry, and fiction have but slightly and slightly portrayed; for these have come mainly from an England which is other, if not alien. True, we missionaries had a "literature," for we used that great word without realising what most of our tracts were not. By itself neither England is sufficient. That is what I did not understand, but already it was what I felt.

Bearded or shaven—"How like the traditional Christ!" exclaimed an ardent soul looking at the secularist platform and the features of the secularist president, G. W. Foote—the earnest, Free-thought lecturers left in my mind, I think little more than pictures of earnestness. The local secularists who stayed off the platform were

more impressive. One calling himself "MacSiccar" was reputed to be, under that disguise, a professor from the University College. Another, an alderman and with means, boldly lived in "Bradlaugh House" and feared none. Two were especial friends. During long after-meeting walks toward my place of exile, we debated many things. Do objects really exist outside ourselves or only as concepts within our minds? Was Bradlaugh's opposition to socialism just or should his arguments be set aside? Others preached. These two probed and searched. Of the two, one had forsaken the middle-class gaieties of parties and dances (his wife still lamenting the good times gone) and now lived for philosophic seriousness. The Spencerian lace operative who was the other friend, in his home where the overflow of books occupied the stairs, and his wife was too shy to lament anything, never had lived except for knowledge and discussion and a milder reformist zeal. These were his consolations for alternations of overwork at the factory and hungry short-time.

The initiation into "Movements" meant, also, the commencement of a still longer and deeper contact with the "literature." Away from the pamphlets, the "National Reformer" under J. M. Robertson was scholarly, if sometimes incomprehensible; and Foote's livelier, sarcastic "Freethinker" could not only be read but contributed to by myself. There still remained "Saladin's" "Agnostic Journal." But in this dawn the bliss of finding friends within a town metropolitan by contrast with the mining township, was more purely fed by a sixpenny, centenary edition of Shelley, purchased from the bookstall. This *was* literature. Here the Englands joined. With this wine of song (or, sometimes, frothy beer of rhetoric) I could mount with the skylark on the heath and live as a disembodied spirit, serene amongst the ideas of the earthly paradise to be. From that paper-backed, closely-printed, first-chosen volume of poems there came, for me, a light like that pictured in old engravings as radiating from the Bible. I read, too, a life of Bradlaugh. This is now a forgotten book; nevertheless it gave me the story of a hero far eclipsing my boyhood's Saxon Harold, a hero of the mind. Mobbed, persecuted, forced into debt, turned out of Parliament, he would not be defeated. Again and again, in his constituency of Northampton or alone at the bar of the House of Commons, he fought and won. Amidst the dust of the shop I thought of him, and was set afire. Through Bradlaugh, through Shelley, through Bruno in Italy, my generation had gained its freedom to think and speak.

Freely we had received. Loyally we must repay.

VI

The "National Reformer" described itself as "Atheist, Republican and Malthusian." A bishop is said to have translated the motto into "No God, no king and as few people as possible!" Left to itself, perhaps the secularist emphasis on "the trinity of father, mother and child" would have been overwhelming. Even stark genius, in *The City of Dreadful Night*, could not exclude current, secularist sentiment about "the sweetness of the home with babes and wife." But Malthusian prudence balanced the expansive perorations.

At seventeen I had read Neo-Malthusian booklets, and also (and with excitement) an American book of sexual physiology coming not from the secularists but from a Nonconformist fellow-assistant. But all this crudity could be forgotten by a boy in love. The blare of steam organs at the township fair softened and became tender, and flaming lights and autumn darkness made a symphony of glow and shadow, when that boy's heart leapt to one within the noisy riot. Poetry had not provided everything. On the brightest early-closing days in summer there had been desolations which Shelley himself could not charm away. Now it was poetry and not physiology which revived. Instead of prudence, it was the spirit of romance which passed over the materially-bleak prospect from the shop, to live in the riches of the dream beyond.

The housemaid, the collier's daughter, was slightly older in years, but younger as well as wiser in love. Hers was a demure and contained, yet giving and trusting and palpably happy affection. None the less (she said to herself) how could it last? She, the ignorant servant girl; he, the premiated apprentice, sitting at the table she served, and clever enough to write verses and disprove the existence of God! The longer delayed, the harder would be the break. Yet who would break what was so innocent: together, changing for each other the darkness of the streets; together, going to Nottingham, to the lectures and to the Castle; together, sharing every virginal enchantment: thoughts, words, embraces, kisses.

But the fourth prentice year passed, and the employer knew better than to pay wages to so uncommercial a draper. The journeyman went elsewhere. But did his feelings tell him all he should have known of what was in that twisted smile, and in those wet, grey eyes, holding back the first tears he had ever seen trickling on his account?

Four months of absence, and then the holiday pledge so affectionately given was that from now all partings would be temporary. But letters decreased. Another year and the housemaid, too, had

become a draper's assistant. But the journeyman went still further from her, to work in London. After this, two years, or perhaps three, all silent! Busily forgetful, the lover removed to the industrial north. There, more widely separated than before, he heard of her, in London herself. He knew the West End servants' district from which she wrote. It was a dreary district, of small shops always open, of sweated assistants. Disturbed, he wrote, but the cries that escaped the restraint of the quick reply—"I have such a desire to see you. . . . It is very miserable on Sundays"—were, to a youthfully-callous mind too occupied with ideas and impersonal ambitions, still more (and differently) disturbing. A second silence began. This gulf is now more than fifty years' wide.

T. E. Brown wrote of "Kate":

And sooth to tell, 'twas just as well,

Her aitches were uncertain. . . .

But what do aitches or any such things matter? What are they against a neglected and now undischageable debt, not to a boyish dream but to the profoundest human need? So we make for ourselves relations which no power on earth can adjust. Happy are they who can look back on a path to fulfilment simple throughout, and never blackened in retrospect by the shadow of self!

Chapter III

SECULARIST TO SOCIALIST

I

ONCE at a Midland colliery the clerks struck work, and the men below were astonished to find that without these reputed negligibles the pit had to stop.

Shops are everywhere and, normally never are closed for many days together. So their place in the industrial scheme is also lightly valued. In regarding them cheaply, socialists hardly have moved beyond the conservative, shopkeeper-despising Tennyson.

Neither my interest in the colliers nor my lack of interest in my work kept me so far from reality. Distribution through shops or warehouses has a governing part in the industry that feeds and clothes the world. Only through shops or similar agencies are the

peoples in their homes related to mines and furnaces and far-off plantations: shops are the first link. Whatever the mask of proprietorship and profit, the shopkeepers are, economically, the consumers' agents, organising and directing demand. In Utopia the fact will be recognised and honoured. Store managers and their staffs will be trusted servants, and consumers their principals and friends. Innocent of secrets, trade will be directed to consumers' benefit; and the purchasers, in turn, will rule their demands for the good of the workers.

Shopkeeping in its complexity, as I have said, had to be as actual for me as anything else; but at eighteen the socialist transformation that I dreamed of left the customers out. The shop stood for making money, with no more than an incidental and perfunctory goodwill toward its public; and I was so far faithful to the existing shops as to feel no bond and develop no new sense of obligation. We assistants enjoyed selling good materials, whenever we knew enough to pick them out but for the sake of tiny commissions or "spiffs" we were more ready to unload inferior stock.

What were customers to us? Customers crowded as if purposely to delay closing times. Or they appeared in ones or twos to spoil the slack half-hour immediately following the mid-day meal. Whether by congesting the weeks before Whitsuntide, or pressing upon us when we had trains to catch on Christmas Eve, or by interfering with window dressing, or complicating the mornings of early-closing day, or simply by postponements that inflicted blank hours on Saturday afternoons, customers never failed to act awkwardly and unseasonably. Customers hesitated, haggled, lied. They were ignorant, stupid, wayward, tedious. In them was meanness, greed and even treachery. If in a certain sense we served them, there was no need for love. We depended on the shopkeeper, but since people had to buy clothes we felt no further dependence. So, behind their backs, we could enjoy mimicking customers, and remembering them for sport. Friends there might be on the unprivileged side of the counter, but they were as friends amongst foreigners. Customer-friends were customers with a difference.

Some of my fellow-assistants were sons of farmers or of tradesmen in small towns. Eagerly they discussed with friendly commercial travellers the prospects for new businesses within the coalfield. I was uninterested. During my time I have seen men succeed in retail trade while remaining active as socialists and social workers. But the young are pessimistic. It seemed that increasing competition and bad trade must drag down any small man daring to possess

himself and live generously. It was without hope in what I was doing that I went away to a new employer.

II

The new home (also governed by the truck system surviving as "living in") was in Coventry. This was the city from which watch-making and ribbon-weaving had gone, and where the cycle trade was believed to be going. Meanwhile, south, east and west, the city remained a pleasant country town. Here, ranged under one working employer, stood a whole line of shops, a nineteenth-century departmental store, now long vanished. It was a dignified Emporium, superior to displaying goods at the door and presenting windows crammed to attract the hungry working class. Farmers' wives came in on the market day from a countryside spreading into three counties, and no antipathy towards customers could deny a pleasure in serving such well-fed, friendly people.

I arrived on an early-closing day when the young men of the Emporium were gaily at large. They trolled a new pantomime song:

We went toddling down the street,
A little bit rocky about the feet,
The girls all said, "Now, mind how you go!"
Nineteen jolly good fellows all in a row!

The bawled rhythm snatched to itself the magic of the March twilight under Coventry's dreaming spires; while, incongruously, it promised a Liberty Hall. In place of a Conservative, family household in a Radical township, here, in the old city, was an easy-going barracks. The sexes met only at the mid-day meal on working days. At other times, apart from a seasoned housekeeper, the company was all male; and then, while a mouse-coloured young man kept his solemn eyes on the "Christian Herald" propped in front of him, a dark, curly-haired, boisterous but not-so-young assistant untruthfully paraded his amours. Manners were for the shop. In the sitting-room speech was free, and food cheap, as when an apprentice boasted a record of seven helpings devoured, against his rival's six.

III

Except for two Welshmen arguing in Welsh, in the whole barracks no one was interested in discussing religion. Furthermore, it would not be counted against me that I went openly on Sunday mornings to socialist meetings on the arid acre known as Pool

Meadow. Here, then, was a lifeless atmosphere for secularist tracts! The militancy of my freethinking died. What remained was the positive secularist faith in mutual help. Man must aid man.

But secularists believed even more firmly in science, and science questioned or contradicted the faith. Man was of Nature, and Nature demanded the evolutionary struggle. Regrettably, man would fight man. The heart—but what was the heart? The feelings attributed to it were for softness and comfort, were sentimental. For easing friction within social groups they were admirable; but they would be found powerless to suppress natural rivalries and war, or to deny Nature's gift for the strong.

I had begun my encounters with what would be a stubborn foe. I doubted my heart and was miserable. But it was my heart which I followed. Evolution belonged to past centuries. Human suffering and human need were present now. Science in the books was less real than the appeal of sympathy between man and man.

And for man, I believed, there is human love or none. Divine care would be love sought from a shadow. Again I heard and read that God would have man perfect, but was bound by his gift to man of freewill, and must act thus and thus. I said to myself: a conditioned God, even though presented as self-conditioned, is under necessity and is no God. *Our* scope is pre-determined, or at best self-determinate within pre-determined limits; for us there can be no figs from thistles, no grapes from thorns. Very different would it be with a Creator. A Creator would be prior to, and master of, all conditions. Present before necessity, ruling it at its birth, never would he be under it. Perfection without flaw or chance of flaw, and all the glory of achievement without agony—which is to say, absolute beatitude—would be his at will. Useless to exclaim, "Prizes without struggle? Sweets, but no bitters? How childish! How insipid!" To say so would be to fix on him (again) our limitations. For if he could not transcend categories, even to the laws of his own being, what Creator was he? Better to believe in no God! Better to see the Christian deity as still emanating from the human mind, an idol of man's own making! So there remained above us only the less-than-human; while on earth man could join with man in a fraternity more dear because of there being no other horizon, no other hope.

IV

I turned to the shop, where assistants came and went. While you are young, everybody said, it is easy to change. But in later years—what then? All day long and into the evenings an elderly shop-walker stood in front of my section of the counter, wearily shifting his balance from foot to foot. In quiet moments he would talk to me about nonconformists persecuted in Russia. He was earnest for religious liberty. But when the employer appeared he would become transparently fussy about some item of stock, or would hurry along the whole length of the shop in craven obedience to an uplifted finger. It was abject; but age and dependence withered self-respect.

Across the floor there was an elderly woman-assistant. Her prescribed, black dress helped her slender figure; yet amongst our youthful band she was no less an oddity. The numerous apprentices knew it. Sweeping the shop after the doors were closed, these lusty barbarians joked about "the old crock." In the proprietor's circle, it was said, she had been spoken of as unsuitable. And one day, without explanation, she was gone. Perhaps all was tolerably well; but I imagined many things. the apprentices' jibes; fears of dismissal. the final blow; an end to life's day. The socialist "palliatives" of unemployment pay and pensions were, as yet, dreams. It seemed as if I were looking on at the taking of an innocent life.

A very different person replaced "the old crock." This assistant was not at all timid or sad. Her face and figure were plain; but the energy of her spirit was unquenchable. In London she had joined a shop assistants' trade union. Possibly she was the only trade unionist then behind a counter in Coventry; none the less she avowed her membership gaily, and commended it both to the shop-walker and to the rest of us. Like everything else it was to be accepted with zest, as part of life's fun.

I, too, joined the union. Man should help man, and here was a plain way. From the public library I borrowed Webb's great history, then newly published. It was not poetry. It lacked the fire of the dark-eyed Tom Mann, passionate at the Trades Council's public meeting in the Corn Exchange. But it gave knowledge, and youth could supply the rest. And, in the flagged kitchen that was the male assistants' sitting room, where the men shutting off the fire were so good-humouredly tolerant of "the anarchist," of many futile pamphlets I began my first. Never printed, like many an early effort it encouraged myself.

Shop workers, I wrote, should unite to improve their own state and the state of all workers with themselves. For, whatever customers might be, workers were fellow-men. Cycle making is a seasonal business. Men told me of labouring to exhaustion in the winter and spring; while in high summer, in the narrow old courts of the city, women toiled at the wash-tub or the sewing-machine to feed families brought near to destitution by prolonged, seasonal unemployment. Other, employed workers we knew by their pallor and unhealth. What monstrosities were these, of rest that was torturing poverty, and work that meant steeping young flesh in an atmosphere of death!

To grasp at every means of radical change I read more industrial history, more of the opposite socialist futures pictured by Bellamy and by Morris, and more current controversy, especially that of Shaw as a Fabian economist against the Marxian, Belfort Bax. Other Marxian writings I read or tried to read; and, becoming a member of the Social Democratic Federation, the Marxian organisation of the period, I contributed Labour verses to the weekly "Justice." The Marxian faith is as the world knows it; yet we few of the Coventry Branch formed a happy band of brothers. We sang Morris's "No Master" and "All for the Cause"; we talked of the revolution—now overdue; reduced to three or four under a gas lamp on a foggy winter night, publicly we continued to argue and declaim. That the rest of the city took no notice of us whatever, was a fact that only increased our zeal for thrusting reports upon the citizens through free "copy" to the local newspapers.

We used bitter words that we did not mean, and crudities of speech that stood for what we could not express. What, then, did we want? Not violence; for we mixed Ruskin with Marx, dreamed of mountains and sea when a comrade returned from a rare holiday at Barmouth, and walked far to find something scenically more satisfying than a Warwickshire undulation.

One Sunday evening, the son of a beerhouse keeper apprenticed at the Emporium went with me to visit a socialist home. The host was a lover of the "Clarion" and a master ribbon-weaver; he had woven Blatchford's portrait in silk. In his deep, easy chair he sat surrounded by his books and pictures, while he talked of the history of Coventry and its ancient guilds. His wife and daughter, both interested in the talk, completed the circle. On his way home, the son of the beerhouse forgot his obscenities.

"By God," he ejaculated, "it makes you sick of living-in at the Emporium!"

And he talked of the domestic life he would like to enjoy.

Happiness was not a dream. It was the thing contrary to the hell of unemployment and poverty, of work made penal, of homes brought down to slums, of disease and early death, of life frustrated and denied. To reverse all this, and to do so by the organised will and intelligence of the suffering masses: this was what we wanted. Happiness on earth, happiness in common, fraternal happiness more real for all than that already present for a few—this was what our agitating meant. It was the aim uniting the robust, small, master-builder in our group, the tired cycle workers, the tall, long-headed weaver who so constantly turned over in his mind the entire Marxian theory, the pale, slender, tireless, outdoor speaker from Lancashire, and the apparent country squire who was actually a London docker when not engaged as a socialist, rural missionary in a horse-drawn travelling van.

VI

It was this same belief that I felt the need of deepening against those ever-depressing doubts created by scientific agnosticism. So I followed the "Clarion" not only to Morris's "Love is Enough," and to "Songs before Sunrise," and Rossetti's "Jenny," but also to Richard Jefferies. On a brilliant summer afternoon I read in the public library the "Story of my Heart," until a tumult of feeling drove me outdoors. I came out to the taller spires of the famous three. The loftiest rose above the wide church that was to be the cathedral: this one I loved. It was the thing of beauty which I saw every day from the old garden at the back of the shop. There was the white blossom of a still-unharmed pear tree and, behind the tree, the crimsoning stones ascending into the evening blue. Or, a mile away, I would look back to the city from a common to the eastward, and would see the spire continuing the upward lines of the gables where the houses stood around the church on their low hill. Now, coming from the library, I saw in full the harmony and grace of tower and octagon and tapering height, the whole rising direct from the ground, to end far above the jackdaws and their happy cries, slender and serene in the untroubled sky. Into the stonework the masons of the past had put something more than labour. A spirit lived in their structure, a loveliness greater than I could absorb, something universal. I knew that political force would not be enough; men of all kinds had to be won over to a better future. Devotion to so creative

a spirit surely could be the transforming impulse. Here could begin Jefferies' religion of life.

Southwards from the city, past orchards long since built upon, I mounted the crest of a rise to where the countryside began. The broad road divided, and amidst wayside verdure its two arms sank away. All the land between them was one richness of meadows and great trees. The fields curved upward to the angle of the ways, where a dozen fir trees stood together, looking over the country below. An easier age had left this little, southward-sloping wilderness to be a refuge for all who might come. For an hour I stayed in the sunshine warm on the friendly turf of this dry knoll. Sweetness was in the air; the few white clouds heightened the splendour of the day; a blackbird still sang; and the tree tops moving with the gentle wind added their harmony. But on this mid-week afternoon it was all one solitude. Where was the gay mid-summer festival for which this stage was set?

With Besant in his generous story I had dreamed of joy for all sorts and conditions of men. But Besant was urban. The joy I hungered for began with the birds, bees, grasshoppers, butterflies, the wild roses and the thyme, and all the happiness and beauty present where I sat. It began; and it ended; for poetry lay dead in the books; while joy of heart was stifled in the factories, and in the dull, breathless city courts. The thought made poverty of the riches of the afternoon.

Yet, as I returned, the children at play in the streets renewed the warmth of Jefferies' hope. Life to be loved and shared: a religion of living: yes; this could be! The bedroom one-half mine was at this hour mine altogether. It overlooked the ancient highway along which there passed nothing of what I dreamt, but always a mundane traffic: railway lorries piled high with crates of bicycles, wagonettes crammed with factory workers flush in their busy season, artillery clattering from the barracks, staid carriers' carts from the country, grey with sun and rain. Now it was silent, except for the call of a newsboy invisible under the shop-front below. I read those final words of "Merrie England" which Blatchford in his later rationalism deleted; words of appeal from the heart, with the word "God" as a symbol. At that moment the whole passage expressed what I felt. It moved with desire for something beyond the present England, something for mankind, something inexplicable. Tears came as I half-knelt by the bed; for, suddenly, amidst the reflected sunshine coming second-hand from the windows opposite, even the

newsboy's cry, below, seemed to have beauty and a depth of meaning.

VII

After the hardest of winters in one of the coldest of kitchens (a detail leaving no scar on the memory of youth) I was transferred to a branch of the business commencing in suburban London. A new High Street, a flamboyant hotel, a park of new villas, and a bus service to London Bridge, had now reduced this suburb to one of many. Nevertheless, a rural Wimbledon, a still more rural vale from Hampstead Heath to distant Harrow, and a Holywell Street of little, old bookshops, made this London of 1895 seem less of a wen than the country-devouring sprawl that had tired my boyhood. Brown sails below Limehouse Church, girls dancing to piano organs in the East End, horse-buses jogging, hansom cabs tinkling cheerfully, porticos carpeted for receptions in Bayswater, carriages prosperously reflecting the half-past-three sunshine of June in Hyde Park, placards of the "Pall Mall Gazette" announcing a new poem by Kipling,—all presented a tranquil London, to be regarded from the nineteen-forties as incredibly safe and assured. From the Park at night the moon could be seen rising beyond Park Lane, broad and flushed, satisfied as if from a city feast.

Westward, the Hammersmith Socialist Society met in the hall William Morris had made by flooring and roofing the carriage way beside his house. Outside were the tall elms, the low, riverside wall and the quiet footway of "News from Nowhere," a scene capable of appearing, at the right hour, not as a "shabby, London suburb," but "pleasanter, indeed, than the deep country was." Inside, one Sunday evening, the poet himself read a paper. Then, released from the task his eyes travelled far away. But the chairman, a young, red-headed man, was all present and alive. His quick glance travelled from reader to audience and back again, to be held for a moment by the affection of a disciple, whenever his vivacious eyes were upon Morris's leonine face. At the end the chairman's tall figure (that of G.B.S.) shot up, to announce with infectious gaiety

"And on the bookstall you will find pamphlets by myself and other clever people."

Serious, lucid, it was a different Bernard Shaw whom I next heard on an election platform in Battersea Park, expounding on behalf of John Burns. Only incidentally a jester, the G.B.S. of this election was a builder of a new and more social London, like T. P. O'Connor, when I listened to him making the best of an audience of twenty trade-unionist shop assistants in the emptiness of Holborn

Town Hall, or like George Lansbury, whose poll my canvassing for him in Walworth helped to reduce to fewer than 300 votes. The young men of the Social Democratic Federation, however, paraded in triumph, cheering the result until midnight and after.

In my suburb, behind the plate glass, I was in prison, yet in a genteel and even friendly prison. Nearer to Bond Street and Piccadilly there was the verminous squalor of those West End slums described at the time in Charles Booth's "Life and Labour of the People in London." Serving the teeming slums, in poverty brought down by poverty, mean shops, low, dark and cheaply-filled, stood in their ranks along more than one main road. On the greensward of Hyde Park itself, the out o' works stretched in the sun were those poorer still, the human fragments, the detritus ground out from the mills of competitive ambition.

It was a misery not quite dumb. A West End branch of the Social Democratic Federation included angry, determined men who spoke to me of intending to use any weapons for overthrowing "the system." To a Westbourne Park Brotherhood, a young joiner, a rebel against London's solid building for wealth and jerry work for the poor, said, one Sunday afternoon:

"You talk of Christian brotherhood; but your class owns everything and my class must beg leave to live. You have us for slaves without the slave-holder's responsibility. If we're not profitable to you, out we go, and where we go to is no business of yours! But our turn is coming and then we'll have no use for you. That's something to live for—to fight you at the barricades!"

I agreed so far as to march behind the red flag, our thin ranks not visibly alarming the Edgware Road; but through the "Clarion" my hopes turned to the socialism of the North, stronger and kindlier; in the North, too, more shop-assistants were free to arrange independently for their own food and lodging. So one day I voyaged northward, going steerage from London Bridge, an extra to returning seamen, and to a cargo of bales of rags for Yorkshire and barrels of porter, sailing over a September sea, wind-blown to white edges on a glittering tide flowing toward the radiant spaciousness of the brown and green Essex shore.

BEYOND POLITICS

I

OVER lunch at an inn on the Yorkshire moors a comfortable matron listened with some eagerness to a young man from Fleet Street. At last her previously silent husband spoke from a face of millstone grit.

"Aw've nivvir bin t' Lunnon," he said; "aw doant want t' go t' Lunnon; an' aw doant think nowt o' them as wants t' go, noither."

That was in 1898. In Coventry it had been easy to find residents who had not seen the sea. Industrial West Yorkshire was as far removed from the Old England of cathedral close and village green, the England south of the Trent. Huddersfield to Oldham, Bradford to Burnley, the industrial Pennines form a region apart. It was and is a land of clanging valleys, and houses in tilted, hillside rows, under moorland tops silent except for the winds, and peewits, and straying grouse. It was, and is, a region of direct speech, of independent ways, of hospitable simplicity, of friendly chapels, of hard work, and of craft in attention to money. Here, in 1896, was the land to which I had come.

In London I had earned board and lodging and ten shillings a week. "Living out," in Huddersfield, the wages were a guinea; but the home comfort and good food of Yorkshire at its cottage best were mine for twelve out of the twenty-one shillings. At the cost of the odd shilling, comparatively I was free. Only escape from the living-in system could have made these elementary things novel and fine. The hostess and her relatives became my friends; I could both visit and receive. Every working day, about one o'clock, I could go out into the open air, up the hill to my home and back; on Sundays and Wednesday afternoons I was a citizen. Not least, I could choose my food. Many hours of my apprenticeship had passed in a yard adjoining a slaughter-house. I had become familiar with animal terrors and with the blood and mess. The butcher's job was one that I would not have done, and so would not have done for me. At last I could be free of it . . . Only after having been deprived of such liberties can one know their worth.

None the less I remained an ill-paid, black-coated littleness, neither knight, squire nor good manual labourer. The "pushing

trade" at the shop meant almost one continuous working day from each Thursday morning until late on the Saturday night. From the jolly, bustling vigour of the neighbourly crowds filling the streets on Saturday afternoons, I was excluded. In my blank alley I seemed permanently outside leisure and books and social life in those so pleasant, larger, stone-built houses toward the greener heights, with gardens about them and thrushes and robins singing in the trees. Though above its depths, it was toward an underworld that I was thrust.

Despite the hearty living (or because of it) the northern struggle for money was more intense. "Money, money, money," shouted the looms crashing under the blackened chimneys where road, railway, canal and polluted river twisted together amidst the mills and cottage rows of the exploited valley. "Money, money, money," was the urge of the manager at the shop, barking at the girl assistants, and staying at the till on Saturday nights to caress the golden coins. To a pretty girl, with a useful, feminine smile, and prospects of marriage, the driving mattered less. But to one plain, and wholly dependent on twelve-and-six a week, especially if she were open to ideas from books, and showed an occasional courtesy towards customers proper only in expensive shops, the pressure could be inhuman. It was fortunate that my takings so often were the lowest. Then I could be the whipping boy and draw the blows from weaker shoulders. Not always did I receive them meekly. "I can talk as well as you!" once exclaimed the manager, pitching a roll of stuff along the counter by way of self-assertion.

The reports of the comrades at the Labour Club were not unlike my own. They spoke of dust and heat in the mills, and of bronchitis resulting, or of rheumatism from cold and wet in the quarries.

"You go at half-past six," said a metal worker, "and the foreman snaps, 'Now then, get into it!' and at half-past nine you see the boss smoking his cigar and coming round to look at his cattle."

In Leeds, a workman-poet (Tom Maguire) had pictured the factory girls of that time: the "feller hand" at six shillings a week; the piece-worker fined for lateness when no work was on hand; the doubly-worn married worker, "weary of fading before men's sight"; the girl under a licentious foreman; the novelette-reader eager for any story to drug her against a dreary round: "tea and bread in the morning, bread and tea at noon."

Like all militant socialist criticism, this was one-sided; but the side was real. And while I heard of these things, I shared the deeper hurt arising from the worker's sense of being only half-wanted

in the community, or less, and compelled by this insecurity to put up with imposed conditions of work, with low wages varied by no wages, and with his permanently lower status.

II

Back I had come to the wage-earners' war; yet more hopefully. The one socialist organisation in Huddersfield was the strong branch of the Independent Labour Party. The Party held to the same Marxian formula of "nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange," and kept the same bitter conception of high values created and low values received. And, in practice, "Labour" again meant the manual workers only. But there was a difference of spirit. The skeleton of doctrine stood clothed in human flesh, and living warmth brought, in turn, a more varied and larger membership.

Politics of the Left had a poor market in 1896; but at the lowest there was a cheering sense of movement.

Members of the Labour Club were numerous enough to pay a full-time caretaker and organiser, a comrade previously out-of-work. Had we consented to sell intoxicants we could have trebled our funds; but experience said that beer meant froth and noise; so we abstained and worked. English and therefore empirical, we aimed particularly at creating a new political party of the poor, independent of Conservatives and Liberals. Let each working man in an election dedicate his vote to Labour only, and socialism could be trusted to look after itself! Yet we trained ourselves in the faith. We read papers at week-night meetings in the Club; or each man would be required to draw a subject from a hat and speak on it for five minutes. We conducted a Sunday School; and every Sunday a speaker was brought to the town to represent us in the open air, or in the hall of the Club. One, an Irish rebel, tall and hard, recited his own, poacher's poems; he was also the author of "The Red Flag." Another had suffered imprisonment for the Cause in Manchester; swept by his trained eloquence we could not have imagined him becoming in time a successful barrister, and dead to us. One Yorkshire speaker was abundantly recommended; but, it was said, he was lame, if not an invalid. Could he be brought to the hall? Would he last through a meeting? He came, physically little hampered, to dominate us by his incisive speech and political knowledge. The eloquence was acid; but acidity in politics is usual, whereas this intensity of smouldering, cold fire was strange and new.

Our conqueror was Philip Snowden. He talked to me in the basement sitting-room of a little house where he was being lodged by a blind comrade. I was to meet him again and again, at any scratch out-door meeting in the Colne Valley during the Grayson by-election, or as ex-Chancellor in the Lobby of the House of Commons; and always it was the same masterful yet comradely Philip Snowden.

We worked in elections: for Tom Mann at Halifax; for Keir Hardie in East Bradford. Enthusiasts in Bradford had crowded the great St. George's Hall; in the Labour Club at Huddersfield on the election night confidently we awaited the historic, the revolutionising victory. The telegram came. Of the three candidates, Hardie was undeniably last. No one spoke. Then, as we still sat dumbly, a laconic member thought of home and bed. He rose up.

"Coom, chaps," he said, "let's go whom!"

III

We remained a solid minority; and the hopefulness implicit in our relative strength extended to the trade-unionist outlook from the shop. The local assistants within the union were numerous enough to form an active branch, to work with the Trades Council, and even to be able to see, in an employer retreating before a deputation, capital bowing to labour. As the local delegate, I could be sent to a national conference, where Margaret Bondfield descending from London was Athena in our midst; and we could find solidarity in Sunday meetings with men from Halifax and Bradford. But my Wednesday afternoons were free; and there was an interval then for personal thoughts to grow amidst my Labour politics like those "in-between blooming flowers" amidst the corn in Heine's "Epilogue." And on Wednesdays, with one or more of Stead's newly-published "Penny Poets" in my pocket, I would leave the grimly urban valley, leave, high up, fields chequered by dark stone walls, and, beyond gritstone and topmost heather, pass to unspoiled, wooded slopes.

One mild February evening I returned from the woodland while the beauty fading in the sunset beyond the moors was renewing itself overhead in the first, lambent stars. Starry, too, was the valley spreading below. A darkness, soft and deep, covered every ugliness of the town. From the sunset's faded rose, the light wind was as gentle. Night and day, autumn and spring, rested together, one in an atmosphere quiet over the width of earth and clear to the zenith. Tranquillity and freshness, freshness and tranquillity, and the response of my inmost being: all reality was in these.

Descending, I passed a church lit for a mid-week service. Voices in song and another spire, in the star-lit evening hardly less ethereal than the sky, ascended together, pleading amidst the now luminous mystery of the night. Was this concord of man and nature accidental, without significance? The air was holy, and the hour out of eternity, detached from all but love and faith. It would be a remembered hour. Was the grace of it illusory? Did this ease of soul signify appetites at a dead point and nothing more? Should I turn away, and go back to economic struggle and to politics as the things of consequence?

"Thou ship of earth with death and birth and life and sex aboard . . . !" Stokehold and steerage battled for saloon food and comfort—that or equality—but the ship drifted amidst the riddle of the boundless waters, the dark sky, the nameless port. No fight below deck would touch this mystery; but it was possible (and passionately to be desired) that the faculty competent to question should receive its answer, and that the news should alter the fight.

Though I did not use these words, these things I felt. And I knew what final demand the answer must satisfy. Through plants, through animals, through human infancy, it seemed that life ascended to consciousness in thinking, feeling mankind. Edward Carpenter had written of "exfoliation," an unfolding toward human fraternity. Men in all lands lived for it, active, leading men; it might be viewed as a cosmic process. Nature and man thus could be in union. But to what heaven would it lead? Knowledge and feeling fine enough for a brotherly world would be sensitively aware of the past. Worship of loveliness, though it took away the sting of death, would deepen sorrow. Ghosts of the unrepaid, the tortured, the raped, the maimed, the massacred, the millions of the enslaved generations whom no present happiness could touch and heal, would contradict and darken felicity. The happiness would be selfish; and selfish happiness was that intolerably complacent thing which decayed and failed.

So there could be no answer. The paralysis of agnosticism must continue. Would it not be wise to look on the whole pageant cynically, as a sham, sure of every life ending in the grave?

I read T. H. Huxley's "Evolution and Ethics." Huxley saw the garden of human civilisation everywhere surrounded by Nature's wilds. Man himself originally was wild. Even yet he multiplied like the animals and fought in armies like the ants. Let him, if he could, cultivate his secondary, ethical, life, and for his greater com-

fort, push back and subdue the wild. But he must not forget that only temporarily could he limit nature's finally destructive power.

So it was the message of science that we could change the world only here and there, easing this and that, but altering nothing radically. The last word was death; and the intermediate hope, some small mitigation of the old, animal struggle. A more polite, more circumspect, and less individual fight; but in business and war man continuing to destroy man. Well, so far as might be, I would refrain. Content with a small wage, possibly a single man could hold the world off, and be solaced by books, friends, and that free delight in open-air, natural beauty which no exposure of tooth and claw could take away.

IV

Huxley's was not the Marxian creed; but the Marxian practical indifference to life's immaterial, unearned joys was enough to lessen the hold upon me of any socialism deriving from that source. My attitude came nearer to being religious. Possessions I could not give up, for I had none. It was the desire for them that I would accustom myself to forego, since they cost too much, and the struggle for them would deprive me of a freedom and simplicity beyond price. Was this outlook religious? It induced me, at least, to look for allies in unworldly faith.

To please a fellow-member of the Independent Labour Party I went again to the Gospels to read them "without bias." But the boredom of my boyhood still clung to them; and I put the Testament away. I looked at the Ethical Movement of my time, then led by Dr. Stanton Coit; but the teaching divorced human morality from the natural order as well as from a deity; and the very bowl of flowers on the lecture room table refuted the disconnection. To Theosophy I gave more attention. Many socialists, in those days, were attracted by the "divine wisdom." It taught universal brotherhood; it was unconventional; and its claims for present-day occult powers intrigued the materialists. And to be born and reborn, the fruit of each embodiment becoming the seed of the next, so that every past hurt to every person had been, or would be, redeemed in the process of teaching and perfecting every soul—in this sublime programme were not all my problems solved?

I was strongly attracted, yet in the end repelled. Theosophy, no doubt, included some truth. So did Marxian materialism. It would be difficult for any teacher to look at the living world and be wholly

wrong in everything he had to say about it. But to me some essential Theosophic ideas were so wrong as to make it better not to accept the creed at all.

Reincarnation was outside any experience I knew. This did not matter greatly. It was more important that Dives should not have authority for thinking of Lazarus at his door, "If I had not spent my previous lives decently I should now be no better than that fellow over there." The man spiritually self-made and self-approved would be more objectionable than the commercial kind. Again, the clash in Theosophy was between the gross and the refined, the "higher" and the "lower." These were aesthetic, intellectual opposites; and we socialists were like primitive Christians in concentrating on a blunter conflict of good and evil, a conflict in which the clever and cultured often were to be found on the callous side. One Saturday evening a milliner's shop a few steps from where I worked, took fire from an accident with a gas jet on the ground floor. Almost at once the shop became a furnace, and a young woman in a top-floor workroom was trapped and fatally burned. Evil was here, in the neglect to provide an emergency exit, and the resulting cruel death of the person innocent. I wanted no scheme of thought to come between conscience and plain wrong. Religion should intensify and not explain away the revolts of the heart.

Three years later I was a Tolstoyan when, in company with Tolstoy's translator, Aylmer Maude, I met an English officer from India whom Theosophy had taught to understand and respect the Indian mind. That was good; and I listened to a man older than myself, better educated, and wiser in the world. But he thought little of my "primitive good and evil" except as "useful to the populace." Wise men rose higher, to a passionless acceptance of destined duty. For this man, I felt, Theosophy has closed and not opened doors. The same conviction arose from reading Mrs. Besant on the "exoteric Sermon on the Mount" (that elementary morality for the many!) and from the "Bhagavad-Gita" (translated by Sir Edwin Arnold) where the prince Arjuna is god-commanded to overrule his natural feelings against killing his own near relatives in a coming battle. The prince "with unstained mind" is to destroy merely the bodies of men destined so to be slain. As the officer had said also, the one essential was selfless action in pure devotion.

It was a surrender of conscience, and a seat of comfort for any agent of any established tyranny; so I put away the argument as a sophistry, and Theosophy with it.

The universal store of the divine wisdom had a department for each religion; and I was led to Arnold's "Light of Asia" and Buddhism. The verses gave a meaning to the Buddhist faith which I had been quite unable to find in the books of reference. Not to reach the anti-climax of annihilation had the pilgrims to Nirvana built ten thousand temples! What came to me was the poetry of a living blessedness, altogether beyond, yet growing out of, the life we know; for it developed through a moral union with every loveliness in nature, and with everything lovable in man. The dewdrop sought not a dark and void but a full and shining sea! Buddhism did not, and perhaps could not, answer all my questions; but the Buddhist temple bells calling to the detachment and pitying gentleness of the Eightfold Path, chimed with those ringing within my heart.

Early in 1898, being then out of work, on a Saturday night I was in the market hall of Rochdale. One stall exhibited a bird-cage. The cage was roughly made from a grocer's box; two feet in any direction was its largest dimension. The box held two birds, and bore a card marked, "Cock Larks, 8d." Larks in a cage under the sky would have been less unnaturally placed than these birds in the stuffy air of the gas-lit, noisy, covered market. And the stronger bird would not quieten itself and sulk. Again and again he fluttered up to strike at the low, wooden ceiling of his cell. Beaten in every rebellion, as often he turned upon his fellow-prisoner, a bird already dejected and miserable to see. With heaving breast and woeful eye, the victim, doubly suffering, begged for escape. He thrust his head through the bars; he crouched in corners, forced to utter a thin wail. The rebel desisted from persecution, looked round with hard, black eyes, and flung himself again at the roof. Once more he fell; once more his rage was against his own kind. But now the twice-oppressed lark fought back. Wings fluttered; beaks clashed. Then the birds separated, the insurgent to battle once more with the terrible roof.

Witless youths looked on amused; while the stall-keeper stood by, indifferent. "Larks are good living birds," he said. "Seldom die in cages."

Beyond the obvious cruelty, I saw a lesson for each man as man. We were under a life-denying mystery, a tyrannous mystery: we were imprisoned by circumstance, and baffled. We were unhappy, rebellious, enraged. And we turned then upon our fellows, companions in suffering, and as pitiable under imprisonment as ourselves! In our unreason, our littleness of feeling and thought, how abject

would we seem to any superior being, any superman from another planet looking on at the earth!

To be myself integrally, and no traitor to the solidarity of human kind—everything else now centred around this aim.

Chapter V

MOTHER AND SON

I

IN flight from the Manchester Grammar School, De Quincey saw the cathedral tower in that city crimsoning under a July dawn. Manchester since then has not washed its face, and what might be the aspect beneath the grime is unknown. The perpetual rain is legendary; the constant descent of dirt is real. Heine found discernment in clouds; they glanced at Hamburg and hurried on! What is there to keep them lingering over not the wettest but the most overcast of British towns? Manchester is without Glasgow's element of metropolitan dignity, without Birmingham's trees and fountain, without Liverpool's sunshine and sea air. The solid warehouses—salerooms for the encircling Lancashire and Cheshire factories—are impressive; yet as Robert Blatchford said, "Manchester is a workhouse with a brick wall round it."

However, the famous cities are not all beautiful. The stones of Venice rise aridly from the Grand Canal. Where railway bridges cross the Danube, and coal wharves and smoking engines line the southern bank, Vienna is not welcoming. In Rome the noises of the Ostia road hammer at the grave of Keats: shut your eyes and almost you are in Manchester. Barcelona and Marseilles include streets to keep out of; and what is to be said for Lisbon's squares when you have discovered the poverty just across the Tagus? On the other hand, no shortcoming abroad adds anything to homely Manchester. Moorish overhead lattices and vines the citizen may not hope for; but his town need not have lacked the fresh paint of Holland, the statues of Florence, the colour washes of Bergen, or every charm of the so-called Manchester of France, Rouen. To live all one's life near Manchester must be a poor preparation for any celestial city.

At a time when Manchester meant for me little more than a

wealth of gaily-coloured tramcars in a fog, I did not guess that every day an exile in the city prayed for something more than any living here or there. She asked for reunion with her son; and of the petition the young man knew nothing and felt nothing. Defeating my aversion and taking me to the place, I saw only chance and desire for a better job. I went to Stockport. The senior assistant in the shop spoke comfortably of the absence of apprentices growing up to push one out. But I first, and then he, and at last the proprietor, were all pushed out. I went back to Yorkshire, to where Halifax slides from Pennine heights until pulled up in the depths by the opposing, half-naked steep. After a few weeks the nervous, elderly proprietor confided, one Saturday night, that he had nothing against me but I wasn't the sort of young man he wanted. He was right, *Marius the Epicurean*, which I had read in a Stockport lodging, was not more out of place in that cotton town than I in the lady-like Halifax shop. Yet I was hurt. I had no wish to be kicked out of Yorkshire. For an active member the strongly Labour town of Halifax had been perhaps too hospitable; and three changes of employment in a few months was dangerous.

I still had to live by yardstick and scissors; and one winter morning I searched for work in Lancashire, at Bolton. The railway station was dark, the streets dank. In the gloom, cotton operatives stood about, also out of work. The shop was in a half-basement, and the owner in shirt sleeves. The sleeves had particular implications for a draper, and I enquired about working hours. "Huh," was the grunting answer, "we don't want no gentlemen here."

From a month in another back-street Lancashire shop I had learned what the word meant: a burial of mind and hope under grinding work.

The "gentleman" preferred to canvass for drapery orders from door to door. The working-class wives at the back of Southport were patient and kind; but the calls did not pay for food. In Halifax, Robert Blatchford's brother, Montague, had supplied me with a journalistic plan of campaign. I operated it, and won a continually prominent place on local newspaper placards, but the top-of-the-bill contributor remained without pay or position. This was too gentlemanly. I moved on, to spend six weeks for a small wholesaler, traversing back-street and rural Lancashire by train and on foot. Success and failure became equally uninviting. Then the Vegetarian Society of Manchester appointed a storekeeper. I was he. Delightedly I was he. It was shopwork still, but for a society, for a Cause!

It has been remarked (by the late Fred Hall, the Co-operative education director) that half the industrial troubles begin with pegs altogether in the wrong holes. I had been at odds myself with selling draperies and my socialist spirit with working under private control for private gain. Either without the other might have proved tolerable. As it was, I had worked as in a foreign country. Eight years of increasing divergence had yielded by-products, but with what waste! And what waste of other lives still continues!

But except in bad dreams I was never again a draper. When it appeared that the vegetarian store could not support a shopman, I became a low-grade clerk. The post was with a Manchester suburban resident calling himself "Robert Dean." His Birmingham principal, I found, was also "Edward Bright," "Richard Allen," "George Arnold" and twenty other pure-bred, English gentlemen. The aliases enabled manager and principal (both Jews) to compare the very various stories of those peers, gentry, clergy, farmers, and hotel-keepers who were on more than one of the lists sent daily to headquarters. In the pleasant, carpeted, former dining-room which was our office, we employees saw none of the clients; but I heard enough to know them as the deceitful and desperate customers of a devouring and merciless usurer. Amidst this villany of 1898, we three Aryans were well-treated. The instructions from Birmingham raged against the "geese" to be "plucked," but outside his profession the manager was a mild-mannered and simple-hearted pirate. If we struggled to quit it was for shame's sake.

After twelve months, and many evenings at a "commercial college," I did quit. In Huddersfield it had seemed to me that for a socialist the Co-operative Movement was a proper employer. The retail society there had ignored my application. In Manchester, the Co-operative Wholesale Society did more than add another unit to its hundreds of clerks. Within two years it arranged what had seemed impossible. The awkward peg was removed to a fitting socket. An indifferent clerk was changed into a useful sub-editor, acting between the Society's printing works and scores of working-class, local compilers of the Society's centrally-printed but locally issued monthly magazine.

II

Experiment by a vegetarian committee temporarily enriched by its institution's jubilee, a minor post in a business soon to be prohibited by law, a chance word in the shame-faced office—these slight relaxations in necessity's dealings had brought me to, and fixed me in, Manchester. But to the mother each apparent fortuity came

within the grace and mercy of a direct answer to prayer. If she had known what depth of insight the relationship was to give to her son . . . but in 1898 she did not know. On the contrary, when the forfeited baby returned in the form of an atheist and nihilist trampling on faith and custom alike, the joy of forgiveness still remained withheld. To the son, meanwhile, the new addition to his existing relationships with step-mother and half-brothers and half-sisters seemed less than necessary. Clouds had broken, but with ironical blessings.

At twenty-three, however, the son could accept any such burden as incidental. Life held other interests. Looking at Manchester, an Austrian visitor once said to me "*Here I feel work being done. I don't get the same feeling in London.*" It is true. Manchester works. What else is there to do? But Manchester and Lancashire labour, or have laboured, deeply and widely. How many social and political movements have begun in, or near, the city? Even the capitalism and the individualism were not mere greed. In the straight, flat streets new a hundred years ago, it can be seen under the grime that the makers, however unimaginatively, meant to provide working people with more solid, indoor comfort at the price than small tenants ever had enjoyed before. Mixed with the masterfulness and the avarice, there was a satisfaction in feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. The chapels, Sunday schools and clubs of the overgrown, toiling, unfashionable hive both proved and fostered a social spirit; and in the Manchester-sponsored movements that arose detached from money-making or protesting against surrender to money power, goodwill issued from hospitable homes with creative kindness. This Manchester, surviving in my time, was that in which the outdoor dreariness could be forgotten.

I had come to the city as one of the socialist crowd which had listened to Eleanor, the daughter of Karl Marx, in the Free Trade Hall; with a similar host I now paced behind the body of a speaker at that earlier meeting, Dr. Pankhurst. Next, I was one of a few, perilously set amidst a turbulently-hostile many, when John Morley strove against the passion rising with the South African war. Fewness was nearer to my lot—a very few in our shop assistants' meeting-room where a young Christabel Pankhurst perched on the table, swinging her legs in excited argument; a serious few amongst whom Ebenezer Howard planted a Manchester root of his garden city movement; a miscellaneous few in a basement café, aiding Charles Beard from America to form a local branch of Oxford's then new Ruskin Hall. Steward at slum concerts, Socialist writer, Labour

Church worker, debater at the university settlement (where the gayest, wittiest, most inspiring soul was J. J. Mallon, the future warden of Toynbee Hall), amateur editor drawing on the ungrudged, free help of Walter Crane, H. G. Wells, Bernard Shaw, Sir Walter Besant and Sir John Lubbock for an only issue of a *Shop Life Year Book*—like others of the time, I was all these. Member of a stage army ever re-grouping under different commanders, I had little time for home. Yet none of these activities, nor all of them together, answered one deep question. In April as I came home from work, above the roofs and beyond the smoke, the blue of the sky was a fairy blue. In July, cirrus clouds flowered over flowerless courts; and in the longer nights the autumn moon outside the meeting rooms was a queen amidst the clouds, touching the town with magic light. These things the movements left out. What was the word that would bring them in, and join them organically with the city of men?

3

Manchester's great public library opened for me Max Muller's "Sacred Books of the East"; while from the west came the wood notes wild of Thoreau, the too-inclusive acceptances of Whitman, and Emerson's jerks of wisdom. But the riddle remained. It became, indeed, more acute. From Manchester there was no immediate escape to moorland heights and bluebell woods. Instead, the city offered enjoyments at a price: theatres, concerts, clubs, and country clubs for week-ends. A number of middle-class socialists did more than take these pleasures gladly. They claimed to be serving the goodness of beauty. Artists were rebels; artists were free; and liberated now by his socialist faith, for what should the socialist live but the artist's joy in life?

Other socialists, middle-class and working-class, were self-sacrificing. For a cause that then offered nothing to careerists, they attended Sunday meetings, accepted unpaid offices, worked in elections, gave time and money. Life was one; but was it all as one to drudge at socialist organisation or to enjoy, irresponsibly, plays, pictures and books?

I could understand an artist enduring hardships in fidelity to the truth and goodness of his vision. That was not my problem. My difficulty was in ranking beauty with truth and goodness—Leighton at an Academy banquet with Bradlaugh staggering under his debts, or Father Damien amongst the lepers. I loved beauty; but goodness went forward with man; while beauty hunted with the tiger. Truth and goodness had gone to the stake; beauty had stayed

in the palace. Goodness and truth joined with the poor, leading them not to imitate the rich but to create fraternity; beauty served the rich, a favourite, a mistress, a seducer . . . Like any lover I could hate and desire! What was the truth?

In this darkness an appreciation by Bernard Shaw sent me to Tolstoy's often misread and undervalued essay, *What Is Art?* And Tolstoy haled me forth. He took away nothing that mattered.

The impitiable Daemon,
Beauty, to adore and dream on

remained. She moved with clear moving water; her diamonds were scattered from the prows of ships; she was the virginity at the heart of living wood. Even the Russian puritan's attack on pictures of the nude still left a shapely limb better to look at than a broomstick; and in the Shakespeare that Tolstoy slighted, Perdita and her flowers, and Cleopatra darkly magnificent above the clown, stayed as they were. But the cult of beauty fell into a fitting place.

Under the terror of the magistrate's inquisition in *Crime and Punishment*, or before Goya's war pictures or Manet's *Execution of Maximilian*, to talk of beauty would be frivolous. With a thousand feelings, life includes fear and horror as well as the callous impassivity of Manet's soldiers. And art is as wide. Rouget de Lisle's hymn was to revolution and war and not to beauty; and in 1915, even to a pacifist, it was contagious fire. War has no doubts; it speaks, in this matter, with Tolstoy. Art is that which communicates feeling. The Russian master was explicit. Where feeling has been sincerely and originally experienced, directly or imaginatively, and skill is used to organise the experience in a form under which others can receive it and share what the artist has known and felt—there, said Tolstoy, is art. The more effective the communication, and the wider and deeper the range of infection, the greater the art. The greatest is universal.

But (Tolstoy continued) art may be powerful and yet not good. This does not mean that art should moralise and preach. Art is life intuitively known and imaginatively expressed. The moral quality must live in the art like the green in the leaf, the blue in the sky. Neither can art be enlisted; it must be of itself. The good or evil will arise from the spirit of the artist, according with what he loves. Thus, the moral judgment is upon the spirit of the work. If the spirit be like that in the stories of the prodigal son and the good Samaritan, its goodness will be felt. But it may be opposite, a spirit of poisoned hate or of sadistic delight. It may be anything

between such extremes. In every case, the more powerful the work, the greater the good, if good; or if evil, then the worse the evil. As, intellectually, the impostor must be sorted from the true artist, so, ethically, we must discriminate between ministers of good or ill. And the moral discrimination, said Tolstoy, belongs to the only valid religion of our time—the faith in human brotherhood.

I stood at the dead end of a street in Salford—Manchester's over-shadowed and neglected but populous sister city—inside the rope holding back from our Court and Alley concert ground the younger part of a big audience. Beside the piano (loaded with flowers for which the children would swarm) a locally-famous contralto repeated "Annie Laurie." "Gi'ed me her promise true, That never will forgot be . . ." Through the still, warm, lamplit dusk the deep tones carried to men and women who sometimes had forgotten, men who had been out of work, and had tramped and met other women, and women who had been the other woman. Freely given, without money and without price, in this street of dreariness forgotten by the hushed crowd in the lamp-light, true and good art did its work.

Whether as a sword, a ploughshare or whatever else, art is an instrument, a tool of (and in) the spirit. As in the worst of D. H. Lawrence or of Aldous Huxley, it may be the tool in one case of wilful anger and despite, in the other of fascinated disgust. Or amidst fine technique, the spirit, and therefore the art, may be missing. Or the art may be that which Tolstoy craved, effective and of the people and lovable, like Robeson's negro songs, or the "Willow Song" in Verdi's *Otello*, or certain short shories by O Henry and William Saroyan. However, *What is Art?* shows how personal is the choice of examples. That which matters is larger. Art is like science, said Tolstoy. Neither is separate from the human struggle. Each is single; each is mixed in spirit from the good and the bad, from the feelings and intelligence that are of love and understanding and from those of perversion, corruption and denial. And there is no greater servant of human brotherhood than the art which is both powerful and good.

From the great but controversially overburdened essay of the Russian master, this is what I learned; and I felt a problem solved.

IV

Tolstoy used one recurring phrase: the Christian perception of life. What view was this? And if it were one open to all men why should it be fenced off as "Christian"? Had Tolstoy less impressed me, I would hardly have stayed for an answer. But he was original. What could he mean?

On an evening during the early summer of 1899, into the bare, wide fields just south of Manchester, I carried a paper-backed, slim volume, *The Christian Teaching*. Over those fields the sun of that evening still shines. From a distant horizon it lights the level pastures, and the rough, taller grasses where the wandering line of a brook comes to my feet. Those fields have vanished under houses, but for me they still live in the light that came from the book. It is true that when I return to this and the other works, *My Confession*, *What I Believe*, and *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*—writings from which, in 1907, I had to recover my liberty with a small book of my own, *Tolstoy: A Study*—they seem faded and even uninspired. Old and toughened against the best propaganda, I miss the corrections and balances of English common sense. But we would miss them in messages from heaven. No one now would go up and down the byways of the didactic Tolstoy, but his highway and bridge that I used and too lightly have paid for, are here, and good for generations yet.

The present century sees a new world every twenty years or so; yet it is always the former, the old. Wars and revolutions pass; and the world is left lovely still, and terrible. When the excitements of the airman and the biologist are past, when the wheels have stopped running and the workers have gone home, the contradictions remain. Life gives, and life tramples on the gift. Life which it is joy to share throws each of us back upon himself. When it is most good to live, from living we are torn away. These torments of the mind will not alter for our grandchildren's children; democracy, communism, fascism are, in comparison, childish things. My problem was ancient; and so far my only comfort had been that of the woman sent by Gotama to find consolation for death: I was but one in a multitude. How could any Christian perception deliver me?

For the first words of the answer I had been prepared. Socialism had made it obvious that no man belonged wholly to himself. Without an organised social order none of us could have lived. The further doctrine of a community or nation being a social organism, with each of us properly a living cell within it, I had met but had neither accepted nor rejected. In protest for wages and free time, and in special protest against sleeping in an employer's house and depending on his table, I had found encouragement in socialism for not surrendering personal rights. But for me in 1898 these rights stood only within a demand for equality with any other member of society. They would not have been valid against a community fundamentally conceived as superior to all, provided it was a society

accepting everybody born into it and dealing in equal fairness with each one.

Again taking myself as a unit only (and the only unit known to me from inside, as well as out) this same question of property in myself I now had to consider more deeply. My body, like my clothes, I counted mine. But (however desirable) not in its wingless shape, nor its curious viscera, nor its secretions and hungers, nor its precise temperature, nor in a single hair on the head, was it my handiwork. Nothing in it was more private to me than its maleness; but who had chosen that? The physical heart, that engine which I had not started and could not mechanically shut off, day and night beat out the reply, *Not you, not you, not you!* I was in my body as tenant; but I possessed it as little as I possessed the sun.

Interwoven with my body yet so definitely extra to it, there remained the self. This was I in my soul. From the sorry scheme of things, this I, with all its personal characteristics, could and did sit apart. This was myself, free to criticise and judge. In pride of person I could say, *I know better than that*, or *You wouldn't find me making such a fool of myself*, or *Just like him*—but not like me! Do we not all know a thousand phrases by which we claim superiority over the stupid, the brutal, the mean, and over the cruel world, and over blind nature?

But Tolstoy took me from myself, and turned me round, to see myself and everyman as we are. For the self, like the body, is other-made. Because the self of thought and feeling is so much more intimately near than the body, and so blent with the will, hitherto, like other men, I had missed this plain truth. Yet, clearly, for all that was myself I stood in debt. The rational mind, the proud, fine desires, were powers given. They had come not from my parents or any ancestors; for these were no more self-made than I. They came from a power not other-made, a power competent to create. The most intimate, sacred, personal feeling, the very centre of my integrity (for which, if for anything, I would most choose to live and die) was, in reality, not mine, but was a gift to me. It was an endowment, carrying obligation. It was a lamp from the creative power, showing the world as it should be shown (or shown up) to me; and showing me as I should be in relation to all outside myself.

Without the action of a reality so competent to provide what was most personal that there could be no other words for it than "God" and "Him" (our language lacks a larger personal pronoun) neither I nor any man could have been, nor for any second could be,

alive. This was truth, proved and unassailable. But not easily could I part from the seat of the distress that had darkened my days. The natural science which I had received with schoolboy enthusiasm had ignored what was personal. The "life" admitted was the life shared with rats, guinea pigs, and the fruit fly. Pointing to mutual aid as a factor in natural survival, Kropotkin had protected the finer feelings from Darwin and Huxley; but he had stayed on their own grounds, and had not reached to the roots of desolation. The soul revolted against the preying of species on species, against the loathsomeness of parasites destroying any loveliness for their own mean and meaningless ends, against the whole animal scheme of living by killing. Even if I could trust the soul to be as real as other life, how could I deny its opposite in the natural spectacle? And if I accepted both these contraries, how within one reasonable order were they to be reconciled?

Especially in his essay *On Life*, Tolstoy went to the depths. I need fear no dismissal of innate feelings as secondary, and resulting from over-civilisation. As hunger suggests the existence of food, and sunshine speaks of a sun, so love in man, as simple and true as a child's "I love you," witnesses and cries out to the source and maker. Love, the subjective aspect of the universal desire for life, and reason, the subjective aspect of universal order, are not only to be trusted, but never are they to be harassed and paralysed by external contradiction. Contradiction is to be accepted. Therefrom life derives meaning. For the opposition we see is not in nature, which never can we see absolutely, as God sees. It is in our relation to nature; like colour, it is not necessarily what *is*. It is what we see. And we see as we are made and meant and pre-determined to see. We are set in a process, a process as natural and inevitable as birth and death, but a process originating in the one ultimate reality of God, and therefore divine. Tolstoy described how in his heart joy had answered to faith. Joyful assurance of meaning and indestructible purpose in life, arising when whatever there is in us of love and reason is set to overcome whatever in their light is evil, is the witness to the true solution of life's riddle.

Tolstoy spoke of a spiritual being arising from the animal—an angel from a beast. This view I did not keep. In me the angel was too unlikely, unless it were a corrupted angel; and one had to be careful not to confuse the terms "spiritual" and "good." Tolstoy's more satisfying picture was that of man as born with a spade in his hands into a field already being dug, or born with a trowel amidst bricks and mortar and beside a wall in building. And this field,

this wall was the whole human environment. The process was active in the life of society as in our personal being; and (as in us) it was stayed neither by conflict nor disaster. If we co-operated it proceeded happily; but in either case it proceeded. In man its course meant growing wiser and, if not more loving, less egotistic. Similarly in society the historic movement was toward more intelligent human relations and, if not fraternity, an increasingly urgent perception of fraternal values.

Here was reality in action, demonstrating that we are alive by God's will, and set in his universe not for our own ends but to assist his work of love and wisdom. To understand life so, was to possess the Christian perception.

If Tolstoy had sermonised I would have been little interested; but he neither preached nor imposed on daily life something from outside, separate and extra, as other Christian teachers had done. He laid hold of the life I knew, and interpreted it. From a master of mental and emotional experience, I was continuing to see reality from inside. It had become daylight truth that grapes from thistles would be a normal thing compared with deriving, by any evolution, a thinking man from a non-thinking universe. I had to accept the certainty of another Being, invisible and spiritual, a father of the soul. And instead of the acceptance cumbering and complicating thought, it was a solvent, and cleared the mind. "God" and "Father" became necessary words, like "man" and "world"; and if they conveyed anything mysterious and supernatural (as they did) the content simply added to the supernatural mystery in any personal existence. So they have remained until now, truths which not all the ingenuity of atheistic psychology can explain away.

It is the obvious which, because it is so near, we fail to see; and Tolstoy's picture of the universal process impressed itself as plain truth which only an egotistic outlook had missed. If there was anything sensitive and fine within me, it was lent to enlist me in his revolt against everything less than the joy of heaven. Useless to ask how a God of love could permit suffering; for I could neither name suffering nor question it apart from the feeling and intelligence implanted in me by him. Job, in his questioning, spoke "the thing that is right," because he exercised the power from God within him; but the other attitude of criticism, the old, cool, sceptical, egocentric attitude became childish. There was no point of detachment at which I could be captain of my soul and master of my fate. Even were I to curse him, and will to die, I could not end at my own pleasure. Instead of dissolving on a smile of scorn, I must accept

humiliation, and suffocate in gas, or open a vein, or reach what would be his appointment of death, by using some other means within the natural laws representing his all-pervading will.

So the God in life and over life to whom Tolstoy directed me, rose in majesty as a true God, and no creature of necessity. The apologists I had listened to—grasshoppers explaining the sidereal system—had not seen themselves. They, indeed, had cast, or had tried to cast, their own shadows on the sky. All humanity was within the crook of his finger; life was his justification; and we could only see and understand. If I had been no more than a body I would have moved like the elements, this way and that, unknowingly. But I was made to be more than a thing. Although limited, I had the freedom of a workman, an agent. I could perform no miracles; but within him, according to my given nature, I could be "I." This it was to be a soul; for (again) the soul, like God, was not an extra. The soul was myself, not in a kingdom but in a vice-royalty. Tired with all these I might seek his rest of death; but while I cared for understanding and loving-kindness, I would not be outside his work and him.

Now, in all this there is nothing new; yet for me it was all discovery, and more. Secularism had left me befogged. From this fading patch of blue to that wavering, misty light I had wandered, or had stayed hidden where socialists, for a lighthouse, built their tower of babel, a tower that would never rise high enough to overtop the gloom. Nothing was sure except death, the anti-climax. But Tolstoy had turned me about to find higher ground, beyond the fog, by a way open to everybody. And how delightful it was to breathe again and see the world plain and simple!

V

There would be no testimony to the new outlook if I let it be supposed that the whole gain was reached during those few evenings by the brookside flats. I have gone forward to include much from the labours of nearly three years. Six years of past Godlessness demanded argument. Newman has said that ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt. From an extreme of doubt, I had to advance through recurring difficulties.

Even while I read Tolstoy, on his mountain top stood the electric figure of Nietzsche. In his declarations, also, morality and nature met—or were united as the lady with the tiger. Anyhow, he made the problems vanish, and by the end of 1899 I was in a mood to consider the way of it. Poor I still was; but my routine work kept

me secure from private employers and their shops. And I had advanced to the national executive of my trade union, and as a socialist writer and speaker. Direct oppression I no longer felt. Direct sympathy joined me with others worse off; but sympathy, said Nietzsche's Zarathustra, is weakness. Avoid its infection! Avoid the miasma of love! Patience and resignation are for slaves! Be generous to the weak; make death easy. But for yourself, be strong! Join those who are masters; will to conquer and live!

So the voice of Nietzsche broke the morning air, falling clear and single from his glittering crags. And the poet of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* was like Tolstoy in his call to awake and find:

"The hour in which ye say: What is my reason worth! Longeth it for knowledge as a lion for its food? It is poverty and dirt and a miserable ease!

"The hour in which ye say: What is my virtue worth! It hath not yet lashed me into rage. How tired I am of my good and my evil! All that is poverty and dirt and a miserable ease!"

I was twenty-four; and these were bugle-notes for the young. Away from comfort, they sang; away from the suburbs; up to the heights; to those dangers of mastery which are exaltation, for so nature moves to beyond man!

The call was both aristocratic and unworldly, and it was this double note which made it fascinating and gave it power. It offered no prizes of money, rank, or fame. Fearlessness, sureness of oneself, pride in difference, conquering knowledge, and, especially, a joyously-pagan religious sense of uniting with the vigour of nature in the kindling strife far beyond man—these would be the inward gains . . . Rewards, no doubt, for some khan born to them, and not bored with them, but as aims in the modern world for a Manchester clerk soon to look absurd! But it had been forced upon me in the shops that I was odd. Oddity had meant being less than other people. It had brought a shadow of failure. Now it was beginning to appear that difference from others might, after all, be a distinction. This was not my conscious thought; but it was a feeling entering into my dangerous sensitiveness to the voice of Zarathustra. So I listened again as his author cried: Love not your neighbour; love what is far off! Away from the herd; away from the much-too-many!

What Darwin described, Nietzsche adapted. He turned science to religion, and a poetic and mystical religion, where that of Marx was prose. But whether the humbleness of love could be so disposed of was a question which the commonest of affections was to decide

VI

Within twelve months of 1875, the year of my birth, the mother had surrendered her baby, convinced that her sacrifice would be for the infant's good. How much easier it would have been, she felt, if both had died! Sadly she submitted; God had not willed escape.

From time to time the mother wrote; but her letters were not answered. On the boy's birthday, year by year, she sent for him what she could. The small sums were invested in his name, but in the end the local building society that held the money failed. As he had known nothing, so he received nothing.

During twenty years, silence! Ignorance on one side, and on the other, endurance. But at twenty-one the young man was to be informed and brought to her; and he came.

Before his arrival the son had written letters. But, how queer! His letters had ended with "Yours sincerely." How could her only child have brought himself to write such frozen words!

But she was to see him. She wished in her heart that she could have received him elsewhere than in Manchester, in a home without a lodger, without such old-fashioned, heavy furniture, a home in her Surrey birthplace as she had known it, far from the grimy Manchester streets. He was already out of place. His father had put him into the drapery trade, a wrong occupation for any member of her family; for it was the trade her father had failed in, that her nephew had gone to Canada to get out of, that she herself, in Bath, had fled from to that disastrous Leicester housekeeping. But evidently her lad knew nothing of this.

Her son, yet brought up not to know her! He would not yet have heard of her marriage, so long ago, to a widower with son and daughters. However, that happiness was past. The grown-up step-children, and the tenancy of the house, and the life use of the furniture, remained. Lodgers had come and gone; it had been a hard struggle, with the furniture like a raft floating her just above destitution. Now, with her nieces in the house and one of them able to contribute, it was easier. How she wished her son had a place in Manchester, even in a wholesale warehouse! Then they might not need to have a lodger taking the two best rooms, and compelling her to see her son for the first time, as a man, only in the kitchen . . .

In 1897, in the summer, he came, brought by his father, that slim, bright-eyed, energetic, bearded man. She had not seen his father since . . . and she had wanted never to see him again. The father talked like the stranger which he was. It was better like that, yet

still difficult and disturbing. She had to be reserved, yet she could look at the one child of her own.

"Anybody could see he takes after you," her niece had managed to whisper. Yes, he was her son, her lad. But how strange, how distant! Not a kiss; hardly a greeting! How had he been brought up? Even an untaught child would turn by instinct to his mother. It would be in his blood. And if he were a Christian . . . but his father had not believed. Was it a mistake to have let him go? If she had kept the baby, the man would not be sitting there looking as if his mother was nothing to him at all. Or, worse, as if he wanted to get away from her. It was horrid, unnatural!

Bidding good-night in the narrow, dark hall, with his father already outside, the son would have shaken hands with his mother, coolly. But stronger than the hurt her passion rose up within her. "You must kiss your mother," she cried. Nevertheless, he would not even pretend. And this was the reunion! Thus had come back to her the baby that had clung to her breast, and that she had nursed from death!

A year later he arrived, coming as she felt he would, to live in Manchester. But instead of joining his mother he took other lodgings! Six months passed before he would agree to occupy the room waiting for him. To have her son living in her house had been her prayer, but that it was so cruelly half-answered was her punishment. His strange ideas, and his rudeness and positive contempt were hard to bear. Otherwise, an argument about the weather, for example, would have been nothing. Perhaps he was right; perhaps it is foolish to think that the weather changes with the moon. But a son ought not to call his mother silly, and, just because she doesn't at once give in to him, make her out to have no brains at all.

He judged everybody, and said they were wrong; as if everybody could be wrong! Everybody, and especially every Christian, knew their duty in life. It was to be useful, and to work to build up a home and give happiness to others. If we all did that, there would be little amiss! But he argued that home and wages were bribes for which men who knew better joined to swindle other men in business. He talked as if business was nothing more than fighting and grabbing, with "playing up," as he called it, to "bosses," and a robbery of those who could not help themselves. It all sounded horrid. A young man must be dreadfully conceited to judge everybody like that! Yet he seemed to know a lot. It was difficult to answer him. Sometimes he would not even let you speak. There

was that man he brought home, John Turner, an anarchist or something, whom the United States Government would not let in to America. How those two talked and talked, ignoring every remark she dared to make, just as if his mother's opinions were not worth considering!

Her niece told her that the real trouble was not in the difference of their opinions, but in the similarity of their characters. They were too much alike. Both were independent in mind. Neither would give up any idea until quite convinced. The niece was right. She knew the aunt whom she loved and with whom she lived and worked. And she saw the conflict sharpened by equal jealousies, on one side because of a thwarted desire for possession, and on the other by an inversion which caused the young man to be jealous for his superiority to possessiveness.

Again, the niece and cousin thought, the two are alike in unconventionality. She could understand the young man's scorn of the tame streets, his urge to inhabit either a Walden or a slum tenement. All that had been not destroyed in his mother, but it had been radically subdued. His turn would come. And she could very well understand his mother and him on religion. They disagreed so terribly because both were so much in earnest. She went to chapel with her aunt; but mother and son would go where they believed in going, and nowhere else. They were of one stock, with the difference that he, who knew so much more, had so much more to learn.

The mother had illnesses, and until just before her death no one knew the cause. The first specialist consulted got half way to it, but he misjudged the rest. She would not last beyond three months, he said. But after six months in bed, the patient recovered. Two or three years later, without discovering anything, another specialist experimented with what must have been primarily far from his department. The pains he caused were gratuitous, but his services, never! The son saw how greedily the man took the guineas, and felt confirmed in his revolt against the priests of science. These coolly-separate probings of a little bit of each person by strangers so utterly unconcerned for the whole (thought the young man) are damnable. A person is one, and to chop up and parcel out the living unity amongst professional specialists is outrageous.

The son recollected a worse case of specialist ignorance. It had arisen shortly before his advent. Although it related to the illness it did not connect with doctors. A lodger's forging of his mother's signature to a savings' bank withdrawal form was converted by a detective (whom his mother's own enquiries had brought in) into

an attempt on her part to get the money twice over. The sum was no more than £5; but the shock of the accusation, and the manner of it, had prostrated her. No medical man treating her had enquired about anything of the kind, yet the likelihood is that the cruel event either began or increased the aneurism from which, seven years later, she died. When the son heard the story he saw how the character and history of the person charged made the imputation of cunning preposterous; and he fiercely resented the stupidity as well as the brutality of it. His sympathy may have helped; yet the pity was that on his own so different side he did not let the story teach the interpreting and healing values of gentleness.

But the religious arguments continued; and they were intensified rather than moderated by the son's theism. That may not have been all his fault. No doubt the evangelical plan of salvation was intellectually feeble. Quite possibly Tolstoy's picture of Christ included elements of reality which made some presentations look like stained glass. And any mere ghost of a faith long since swallowed up by the world should be laid. None the less, Catholic against heretic, Trinitarian against Unitarian, Bolshevik against Menshevik, State socialist against Fascist, it is not the pure negation but the possible alternative which offends. Sheer atheism might have troubled the mother less than the Tolstoyan faith that appeared to accept Christ only to rationalise and diminish his quality.

"What has the Church made of Christ?" he would demand. "Just an idol, a hollow, gilded, wooden image! The Church Christ is dead; the Church has killed him. We've got to get past that corpse and find a living Jesus, with something to say to the world! We must use our reason for that. There's no other way of getting at the truth."

The cruel assurance of his words! Not to love Christ, the real superman, whose divinity she felt in her heart! Not to believe Christ's own words, when during thirty years divinely, as a God, he had saved her from weakness and despair. And this was "idolatry!" What could the boy know of such love, even though he was flesh of her flesh, he who ought to be frightened by his own arrogance and pride!

But she could not speak her thoughts. She could only exclaim, "Truth! . . . I want more than truth!"

They were alone together in the house, where she knelt broken and in tears.

Then she lifted her head. "I know men," she said, "and Christ is more than a man."

She could argue no more; but, beaten herself, her cause was won. Repeated in a hundred ways, her belief had become unanswerable.

With no feeling from childhood to intervene, the son had contended as with a stranger. Now he awoke to the kneeling mother. Enough of her life was known to him, and of what Christ in her life unshakeably meant. Here was a faith that no torture would ever reduce. Indeed, it would prove firmer, more diamond-like. This was truth, reasonable, but not reached through reason. It was truth through love. And his mother was right: there could be precision, but without love, no truth.

And the truth of love conquered. Nietzsche must be left amidst the ice, as his followers had at last to leave Ibsen's Brand in his mania, on the mountain top. Kneeling with the kneeling, compelled now clumsily to comfort and repair an intolerable hurt, the son equally was forced to confess, and so to discover in his new assenting words a healing power also not his own.

Chapter VI

GOD'S TRUTH

I

HAVING whimsically posed "God" and the comfort of belief against "No God" and the pleasures of irresponsibility, Louis Macneice, in his poem "London Rain," dismisses both.

The argument was wilful.
The alternative untrue.
We need no metaphysics
To sanction what we do . . .

But we cannot dismiss the universe. The tremendous environment is, was and will be. We are in it and relate to it; in the end it is our master. We may shut our eyes. We may bury ourselves in work. None the less the first and last question stands: what kind of master are we under?

I turn over old lecture notes, and voices of everyday Manchester come back from the dead. They come heavy with old troubles. "I have been for a long time in deep unrest and have no hope of tranquillity." This questioner would have travelled from his heart

to its Maker, but he dared not. "To postulate a being does not demonstrate his existence." In the chaos of the early twentieth century a fine spirit wandered. Spectres of destroying criticism gibbered him from faith. "Assuming a directing Intelligence, will it not have ends of its own, and make all ours futile?" This voice fades, and another says, "I was stuffed with God at school, but understood nothing." And another despairs. "These matters are best left alone. We get out of our depth." But the last speaker, being politically and socially active, did not cease to act as if in possession of a faith.

I could neither take my faith from others nor without faith continue in peace. What is it worth to be young and well if the miracle of youth and health is not within any dear and lasting purpose? Without fair plans, justifications, reasons for confidence, the most worldly of men will neither work nor fight. In the deep matter of life and death are we to be less serious? If we neither have nor can have any warm relation to the universal power, if we are to be ever strangers, strays, accidents, our lives become unwanted even by ourselves. Blindfolded and deceived, a man might continue at any foolish task—taking water from a stream to pour it back, moulding pots from dry sand, or simply revolving his thumbs. We who do not shut our eyes want to know. Land and sea, and the seasons moving over them, include many things, some noxious but none frivolous. Is the awareness in man to be the one element trivial and useless?

For me, now, experience answered. Day and night I lived with Tolstoy's picture of life. These perceptions within, this moral compulsion felt as inward freedom, this entering into possession of a life which becomes the more our own the more we accept it as not of ourselves: here were the evidences of the Absolute in his Fatherhood. On this contact of the tremendous with nullity, and on the grace of it, I was able to concentrate my thoughts. And feeling followed. While I was still a junior clerk, at less than thirty shillings a week, one of two hundred in a big co-operative office, the mechanical simplicities of the work now and then permitted the mind to escape. So I travelled away, but only to halt in desolation before the world's monstrous, unscalable cliffs of inhuman wrong. In those black shadows I stood helpless. Then the new faith in God returned, and life returned. Joy welled up, a strong, buoyant, spontaneous joy. *He lives*, I thought, *he lives!* In front of me was a sheet of weights of tea, and if I glanced through the nearest window all I could actually see was back-street Manchester, and its blackened bricks and

slates under the familiar, grey sky. But to the eyes of the spirit there was a richness of beauty: *he, I felt, is beauty in itself*. Evil had not melted away. No, it was sharp and clear. But already it was half, or more than half, overcome.

At another time, within this same period, I trudged homeward from some trade union or similar evening meeting. Amidst the dull but quietened streets, I was companioned by thoughts of comrades in the half-dozen towns in which I had lived. I felt that I now knew what they wanted in the depth of their lives, and with a happy tenderness I wished for the fulfilment of their root desires with my own. And I thought, *it is through him that our spirits join*. Over the already sleeping cottage roofs, the planet Jupiter shone with mellow brilliance. For its facts, its density, its rotation, I cared nothing. That purity of light was his sign in the sky, and my heart answered. *He is the life in my friends*, I said, *and the innocence in the people of this city—he, who gathers loveliness in himself as the rainbow colours are gathered in the light of the sun*. I could have knelt on the pavement and worshipped.

Again, in Sunday daylight on the same flat, bleak, smoke-heavy streets, jogging to the Labour Church Sunday School, I remembered our nothingness. Of our own, original creating, nothing! This nullity of self I saw and felt and knew. But in that moment I was not like the dead, brought to dust. Far from the self-excitement which is odious even amidst its joy, and as free from self-consciousness, I was most fully myself. Each long, straight, south-westward street stretched away into sunlit mist. *Neither sun nor grime could I know except by his faculties within me*. With this thought and more than thought, the grime perished in the sun; and myself, that had been given up, returned with hope and joy. Beyond these streets of dirt neighbouring with cleanliness, of quarrels and fights and Sunday-morning shopping alongside family warmth and self-respect, and of unity only in common subjection to the house-agent's man with the cash bag at every house on every Monday morning, I lived in life's freshness.

These are remembered hours, although long past. Much in me is now dead; but he is not dead. I am writing this page in the dull month of December; but this morning came with the innocence of spring, and a primrose light on the waves of the hills. But the promise still implicit, after twenty thousand uprisings, is not in any landscape or sky. These are symbols. The joy is from beyond and within, while the spirit can take Nature, glad or ugly, for a known companion in God's house.

Faith came to me fresh and simple and with a child's innocence of fear. Now I was relieved from that depression of mind and sadness of pity which had found a parable in the caged larks. God contradicted became God demonstrated. But I had to answer the old-fashioned secularists with whom I debated publicly, before audiences familiar with rationalist publications. Questions from my own past atheism, also, always would remain ready to affect emotion, like cold air drifting in upon summer warmth. There are difficulties we cannot deny: parasites in their loathsomeness; physical strength and young grace brought to corruption; selfless nurses infected and destroyed; stories of genius—Mozart, Schubert, Keats, Girtin, the Brontes, Tchekov, Bizet—struck down, and the craft and cruelty of the world surviving; burnings to death of little children whom the slightest inward monition (it seems) might have saved. There are the obtrusions of accident and apparent chance: endless daily lists of the maimed and dead; a variation in a gland and the temple of God tenanted by idiocy; health and fortune lavished there, while here, burdens accumulate until courage is ground to despair. Obvious, too, are the outward denials of kindly order: the wastes of the earth's deserts; the wastes of sea; the dead moon and the myriad barren stars; the droughts, floods, fires, frosts; the blights on the loveliness of spring; the deceits of mirages, of treacherous ice, of undrinkable water; the beauties of the Antarctic aurora displayed to no living eye. Life denying life, life exploiting life, life sharpening its axe on life—animals killing animals, man blasting man, blind fecundity as blindly checked—godlessness could tell me nothing I did not know.

What remained new and powerful was the one, all-embracing reply. To name sufferings, accidents, chance, is to be distinct from them in mind. They are of the world and we are ourselves apart. But this difference and awareness is not of our making. Like eyes and ears, the inward self that sees and knows is given. Of ourselves we are less than dead; for the dead have been; and of ourselves we could never be. No mind, no perception, no protest! The given self is wholly in a turmoil (and a peace) it did not make; and the deepest disgust and rebellion, and the finest and purest discrimination and assent, can mean nothing more than a shifting of the weight of the self from one side to the other. It is the seeing and willing to see as bad, that which we are made so to look upon, and it is the choosing to join with what we are made to feel, and given to know, as good.

Good and ill are not illusions. Let famines, plagues, destroying

earthquakes and eruptions, however void of intent, be minimised only by those unimaginative and far away! Let us philosophise as little as their victims over any falsifying, torturing, murdering Iago, great or small! But to keep our reason we must also keep the saving truth. We cannot understand the imposition of misery by love; yet there is no light on that misery and no power over it which is not that same love in us and with us. If the hurt is not from us, neither, ultimately, is the quality of life that puts us above it. Nevertheless, all that is richer, wiser, most desirable, will unite with the self-forgetter—that is, with him who neither grasps for himself nor passively takes the good with the bad. And the awakening, the experiencing, the spontaneously-forward thinking and desiring, is that transmutation of life in the laboratory of man, that process which gives meaning to life and is life.

In one of his stories, through the lips of a churchwoman from New England struggling in New Mexico against ants in her cupboard, pack-rats, sick goats, bears, overwhelming weeds amongst the alfalfa, and mountain lightnings killing horses and trees, D. H. Lawrence cried: "What nonsense about Jesus and a God of Love in a place like this!" Lawrence did not guess how his very awareness of the struggle affirmed the God he denied. Yet, since we must never sink into speaking of creative omnipotence as subject to necessity, one line of questioning we in our sonship must continue. Why is the process required at all? Why did not the Father choose to will an ever more lovable perfection from the beginning? Why does he not now, by one transcendent act of love, instantly and for ever transform the whole?

There is no answer. Even the capacity to receive an answer is withheld. So the final comment is that of T. E. Brown, when his child of six listened on the grave of the brother who had been her play-fellow, and horror of death's silence crept into her heart and she wept—

If this is as it ought to be,
My God, I leave it unto Thee.

Nevertheless, the power to question we must use and keep, for it is in itself a witness from heaven.

III

Again I saw with Newman in his *Apologia* the relation of difficulties to doubt; and now I learned the truth that I would also find in Bishop Gore's *The Reconstruction of Belief*, where he said that we do well to be agnostics, if we put our agnosticism in the right

place. Ignorance in me was shifted from an encumbrance to a relief; and the agent, again, was Tolstoy. Truth, the whole truth, comes from all the facts; and where are these to be found? The facts of this century pile upon the facts of the last, and the next is to come and the next. Meanwhile, though in rocks and excavations the past may be eloquent, observation lives in the present. We cannot go back and make an objective film of the birth of the planets, of the descent of the horse or dog, of the divergence of apes and men. We can form inferences, but we do not *know*. In human history, knowledge may rest on a single author; yet we cannot call him for examination or discuss his words with one contemporary. We guess and assume, perhaps with confirmation, but nothing certain can we draw from the future. And it is we, the earth-bound, who observe. What the universe would be to a superman, super-equipped, and operating, say, in another planet, we cannot say.

Our fullest objective truth is still very far from the whole truth, and where the little that we know objectively is deceiving us through its littleness, we cannot guess.

"Knowledge," says a modern writer (J. G. Crowther, *An Outline of the Universe*) "proceeds from the outside inside." This is to say that all real knowledge is that which the mind obtains by weighing, measuring and logically arranging the impressions of the senses. But I talked with a man who had answered successfully to a criminal charge. He told me that in court, listening to the prosecution, he himself all but doubted his own innocence. Those penetrating minds were proceeding from the outside inside. From the outward appearances, the circumstantial evidence, they created a picture of a person most certainly not himself, yet coherently, consistently and confusingly like himself. The stranger standing in his own skin seemed himself as he might have been. And as it was he who would suffer for the stranger, and not those confident minds, the whole operation was intimidating. To disbelieve his own soul seemed easier. Only in quietness did reassurance return. Then, possessed of his conscience, he did not need to infer, guess, assume or wait for further facts. He knew. Within himself and in this matter about himself he knew the truth in its wholeness. Truth and the confidence in truth arose in him, as if in his integrity he touched the wholeness, the satisfying wholeness, of universal being.

In such instances the inner person is available; but if the soul is not called to witness, as in natural science it is not called, what strange conceptions may receive the precious name of truth!

Judges investigate, psychologists explore, doctors diagnose, and

we need not deny that often they prove right. Yet without the prisoner, the client, it is half-knowledge, or no knowledge, or falsehood. "I love you," says the child (again to borrow from Tolstoy) and all his being declares that he knows and speaks the truth. But what is truth? says outward experience; and what is love? asks scientific knowledge. A once-famous and still important writer told me that life at eighty is not worth having, and that to shoot oneself is better. I saw no pistol; but the other utilities of science he had: preserved foods, medicines; dental plates; correct spectacles; electric heating; telephone; radiogram; taxis at call; printed news; a stored mind; a library to back it, and health sufficient for literary work. All these—and all were nothing!

Science, admittedly, is more than physically useful. Its methods discipline the intelligence; it can check and correct and keep faith and feeling sane; its real and salutary value is past question. But all utilities are of one order, and the basis of religion and philosophy is wholly other. It became clear to me and remains clear that objective knowledge piled to the snowline never can equal for oneself the worth of one living intuition. Man cannot live by the heart alone; but never again should knowledge from outside be allowed to deny the heart, and torment by its denial, as it had done with me. Wholeness, finally, is outer and inner together; but the spirit of wholeness, that which is felt within, comes first.

Where intuitive, mutual sympathy lessens and ends, knowledge sinks into ignorance. Or it is sterile, for only sympathy fertilises knowledge. A woman long married confessed in my hearing that her husband was to her still a stranger. Elemental feelings simply expressed can make a crowd intelligible, or a single person, or an animal or bird. To this extent and further, no doubt, the woman had her husband well assessed. But she knew that such acquaintance is but the shadow of knowledge. It is this half-knowledge, this knowledge from outside, which goes back when it tries to proceed. Strangers, aliens in culture, race and colour, and enemies in war we can describe minutely; and be farther from knowing them than the prosecuting counsel was from understanding the man in the dock.

Still, with men we can exchange ideas. Animals and birds, despite the dog's wordless eloquence and the uncertified interpretations of songsters, are more removed. As for reptiles, the apparently charmed snake will bite and kill, and nothing is proved by the crocodile's tears. Ants and bees are not strangers to the eye; but after thousands of years we do not know whether bees have any feeling for their fellows in the hive. Whether fish are cold-blooded

in more than a physical sense we may but guess, as we can only speculate upon whether plants feel. And the elements are utterly mysterious. This table, this chair, how solid, known and sure! But no! The grain in the wood is rhythmic and beautiful; life has left this pattern; but the dead material reflects our perceptions and imagination, and says nothing of itself. And when this firm substance is examined scientifically, it disappears in a whirl of protons and electrons. The solid fixed things are neither solid nor fixed. They are pure mystery.

Thus I saw where my agnosticism should be placed. Its proper direction was toward theories drawn exclusively from objective study. Objectively considered, my least attractive neighbour (dull fellow!) would seem to have no soul, or none like mine. And Nature becomes a field of ravin. Relief was in knowing how much, objectively, I could never know, and refreshment in realising how much more belief properly could take on trust. Aware of truth alive in myself, I could accept every man as a living soul, and accept the wonder and beauty of the world.

Confidently, therefore, I could take my course over a welter in its depths more hidden than the deepest ocean. To read all about unpleasant sea denizens, dog-fish, cat-fish, sword-fish, torpedos, blue, white and hammer-headed sharks, would move me to admire so patient an accumulation of data for our inheritance. But of meaning, data can tell me nothing. It is because of valid intuitions in myself that I can assume a meaning even in the shark. Like the tiger burning bright, a fish so hateful to the seaman still possesses, as I possess, a relation to the maker of all things. For each species the world is a different world; yet all group together in an order and fraternity larger and greater than its contradictions. The nasty is nasty; yet to say that is to say nothing absolute and of the creation as a whole.

Tolstoy pictured men as moving through darkness, yet each with the given lantern of love and reason within. He to whom all is clear has set this darkness about us, that we may concentrate on moving with our fellow-travellers along his way and with his undiminishing light. Or we can change the figure, and speak of an ocean, with its limiting, unvarying horizon returning our minds to the work of the ship. The purpose, the port and the day's work we know; and there responsibility ends. About all that lies beyond the horizon, we need not trouble ourselves to enquire.

To realise my proper ignorance and the value of it—what an unburdenment it was!

IV

Toward the end of the last century, when in provincial England it was improper to buy any one of the few Sunday papers, during a holiday in Leicester I discovered a Secular Hall with a reading room open to the public on Sundays. Entering the more happily, I found the American *Truthseeker* and a strip cartoon of a Christian first running away with the Jewish god, and afterwards castigating the Jew. The irreverence in the drawing of a wooden-faced Jehovah on Noah's Ark wheels was fresh and amusing. Just as I did not think of a day of many Sunday papers published for heirs of freedom having no time for reading, because of State-compelled Sunday work, so I failed to foresee the time when Jews would be officially robbed and beaten in a non-Christian state, and when millions of others than Jews would be dispossessed, and driven to death, in a country emancipated and officially godless.

From my boyhood the modern world was my world. The world of the railway, the newspaper, the map and (at school) of compounds agitated and spitting in test tubes, was the lively, the fascinating sphere. But from the facts I diverged to the poetry. I had only to keep on and I could hardly miss the faith which rejoiced in Brother Fire, "for comely is he and masterful and strong," and Sister Water, "for manifold are her uses and humble is she and chaste." I did keep on, and now I am far behind the modern world, or possibly beyond it, for I seem not to be of it.

Why should we have separated? Why have I grown cold toward the age which has seen the conquest of the air, the conquest of the Arctic, the submarine, plastics, and so much more? During the fifty years since I marvelled at the stars, science has provided an excess of wonders. No boy of long ago followed his Jules Verne more eagerly than I, whether on board the Clipper of the Clouds, or with the "Nautilus" under the sea. For another Verne there are miraculous things: millions of island universes millions of light-years distant, cosmic rays, radio activity, the complexities within the atom, the subtleties of the glands, chromosomes and genes. But what springtime in any heart does the news create? The first Cockney accent heard in Manchester over the telephone, and the first broadcast voice from overseas gave me almost what the stars had given. But these were passing moments. Already I had ceased to expect from the world of the atomic bomb any gifts of wonder and love.

The modern mind is not led to look up and feel both exalted and humbled before the universe. The story of Job is not for the films; and there is no poetry in the scientific text-books. Marvels are

common. Why stand and gape? What matters is to turn knowledge to account. Knowledge is power. Science means blue-prints for a car, plane or gun, and blue-prints for society. We concentrate upon what can be mastered. You can do nothing with what is above you. You cannot vivisect God nor with cathode rays bombard the Holy Spirit. Even with your equals you are limited. Politics, economics, psychology are, as J. W. N. Sullivan observed, 'hardly sciences at all.' It is only in dealing with what is below the human, or below even the animal, level that you can be really the master. Go down in the scale to the non-living, and you have but to know your material for power to be gained for your country and yourself. But we are affected by what we habitually regard. Science, which has freed man from worship, has taught him to look continually outward and downward, to the sources of material power. So has come the secular drift from the wonderful to the matter-of-fact, and from fraternity with the universe, under one Maker, to conquest over it through the mind used as a weapon.

The rationalism I knew in its halls of science and its secular idealisations, was serious about the abandonment of the spiritual. It proceeded only after much argument, to an atheism conscientious and responsible. Did not Chesterton say that Bradlaugh was the last man who really cared about God? To the bereaved and sensitive poet of *The City of Dreadful Night* the extinction of faith became not only grave but unendurable; and it could be said that Thomson's drowning of his soul in alcohol was less discreditable than the twentieth-century easy satisfaction with godless humanism.

Now those old secularists are gone. They did not understand that the liberation which I shared with them is negative, and that man will not rest on negatives. And there were other rationalists, detached reasoners, friends of dispassionate research; and they also did not understand. They expected men to wait like the Scholar Gypsy for something ultimate and sure. But men will not wait nor proceed for ever with caution, provisionally. They need truth *now*, whole truth, truth they can live by. For the last word of science they can wait, but not for faith and hope. Hungry and bewildered, they will turn to whatever seems a sufficient substitute.

This I have witnessed. During these fifty years I have seen the passing of the old rationalism of passionate denial into one of indifference, and that again into submergence within secular faiths primarily not rational at all. Other men moved as I did, first from a secularism vaguely positive about human happiness onward to the definiteness of socialism. Brought in by atheists sympathetic with

Christian ethics and with Christians leaving churches, there was then a religious element in British socialism. Indeed, it was already a socialism inheriting from Dickens, Ruskin and Carlyle, as well as from Owen and Marx. "God is in the Labour Movement," said John Trevor at the end of the last century; and he could give some religious consciousness and form to feelings especially active in the industrial north. He founded a Labour Church and a monthly, *The Labour Prophet*. But the effort was against the drift of the time. "A jolly good idea, this Labour Church," said one of its destroyers. "With a prayer and a couple of hymns thrown in you get a socialist lecture to thousands whom otherwise you'd never see." Trevor's Labour Church died. The feeling had changed. Socialists had turned to the conquest of power, a political conquest that became the whole object of their lives. Or they concentrated on ideas of arranging society, as if the world were a laboratory and men were things.

From such works one local leader, a writer and speaker, pitied my divergence. He quoted a French author who derided God as "that recluse of the skies" and was modern in declaring for a morality without sanctions or rewards. This friend himself, as he scoffed at my "pretty way to a new anthropomorphism," anticipated the satirical argument of Rupert Brooke in the poem *Heaven*. "Give them all a god!" he said. "Give worminess an Eternal Squirmer, and froggyness an Almighty Toad; yes, and for the human toady a Toadiness Everlasting!" But for the answer that it would be man endowing worms and frogs, and that the toady and sneak never have impressed men as images of the divine, he did not wait. He left me for things "that mattered."

His was the new rationalism of indifference. In public it was polite enough to admit religion (like marriage) as a private interest; and only in effect did it add that this was so because neither was worth public attention. Another similar disbeliever, a conscientious, public-spirited man, a musician and a writer of light verse, long continued to say that when pigs were seen flying it would be time to take an interest in religion. For him, meanwhile, there were "important things": socialist politics, science, and, for recreation, the arts. He has not yet seen that the drift which took him from final trust in the value of what his heart still values most, has circled onward, and that those within the movement no longer take an interest in his rationalism.

The present turn of the downward spiral appears in another friend. His religious spirit was so eager that at one time he would

listen to me in a Labour Church, or, in the open, to the same fluent ideas given out (he said) with eager eyes and bold gestures of large, fascinating hands. My listener knew that men will not and cannot cease to believe. There must be a purpose to live for, and a hope for mankind. But my old friend's hunger is now appeased by Marxian Communism. The Marxian faith he accepts as new and revolutionary, yet in its materialism rightly rooted in the old earth. Within a visible world process, Communism provides him with a unity of action and outlook. It robs Lazarus of Heaven; but that is minor to the passion for the proletariat to possess all that the world gives and can give.

Here is faith in nothing beyond the earth and its inevitable death, and (worse) in nothing now for the individual in himself, presenting its bleakness as a generous and honourable escape from self. That such a laboratory substitute for religion should seem preferable to current Christianity, is a condemnation of what the faith has come to, sufficient—if that could be done—to wither all spiritual hope from the earth.

V

Every such exchange of dormant faith for an active, though deceiving and stultifying, substitute is within the vast European drift. In gradualist Britain it is a moderate drift. No British belief seriously demands the initiation of a violent revolution, as few exclude a kindly tolerance for a decorous and amiable Christianity. Yet it was in England that total nationalism led Europe, when a royal, judicial murderer was allowed to assert by axe and gallows the supremacy of the secular, armed state. Even now, with a church national and catholic, a government parliamentary and monarchical, and an imperial commonwealth, England, in her queerness, can believe herself to be Christian still. But even in England it is clear that the supreme British allegiance is not to the unity of mankind through Christ. It is to British unity under the British crown. And the effective faith is not in living for God and man. It is in the foremost worth of living and dying for British power, British institutions, and fellow-Britons. St. Paul felt no such devotion. He and the other apostles were not British. We consciously are. So we stand to attention for the national anthem, as we did not in the time of my youth; or we sing it with a fervour not produced by any Christian hymn. Divine service may be well; but national service is what matters. St. Stephen died unarmed for the Christian faith. Now a supreme sacrifice is made when a Briton (or a citizen for the Empire) dies fighting for Britain. It is true that Englishmen fell in

battle long ago, at Senlac and at Crecy. Christian belief never has so altered whole nations. But Christian faith has changed and still more can change the emphasis, the depth, the extent; and the difference can be radical. Now, it is the utmost in the opposite direction which is coming upon us, through that substitute religion provided by our supreme, militant faith in British imperial civilisation.

For his omniscient purposes God could only demand that we surrender all—person, family, vocation, interests, possessions. It is this full demand which is now made idolatrously by country, empire, democracy, socialist fatherland, even communist fatherland, and all the rest. In part, it is not a new demand. In France the revolution called every citizen to arms. The present is but an utmost extension. Science in all its branches works unitedly for power over nature; and the total state is but a means for uniting everybody for the same power over things and over men. Science applies itself to the secular and the tangible, and equally the total state deals with what is here and now. Pure science, waiting for truth, finds itself parodied. But revolutions do not wait, and politics, sociology, biology, economics, must serve. If any minority collides with the supremacy of the visible whole, then not the many but the discordant few are wrong. How can it be otherwise? The objective is the real; and objectively what is the individual? His power is negligible. His deviations merely obstruct. And individuals die, while the community lives. Multiply the odd man to a million and, still, what is it? “28,600,000 casualties in all, with over 15,000,000 deaths.” Omnipotent temporal power which can so dispose of men, would not miss you and me!

“I the Lord thy God am a jealous God” . . . “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” When I was a secularist, I saw in such words nothing but barbarism. But they stand for the deepest truth. The Lord is one Lord; the order of life is one. D. H. Lawrence could assert not one order in life but many, each as different and wayward as our least responsible impulses; and the Life Force of Shaw’s Prefaces is as many-headed. But the mind demands ultimate unity, final singleness of aim, and if it misses the real it will accept the sham, and then be driven to enforce the sham.

Within one spiritual order, very different claims can be accommodated, and from errors in accommodation, however profound, love, and the grace of God, can save us all. But idolatries are tyrannous. The Old Testament Jehovah, whom my humanism rejected, was also a god of loving-kindness. “The Lord God is merci-

ful and gracious," said the historian of Exodus. "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," interpreted the prophet Hosea. "Wherefore should this city be laid waste?" asked the prophet Jeremiah. But with the idolatries, the modern, embattled, substitute religions, the ideologies in arms, the "Great Powers" at war, what deaths, what griefs, what rivers of tears affect the dedications to the brazen god, Victory? The old idolators at least worshipped Nature. We have conquered Nature—the subjected aborigine who at the end will master us all—and we can disregard daylight and the seasons, to kill and burn even more cruelly in winter and by night.

The horror of it! And the pity of it! There glowers total war, and to the sacrifice go courage and endurance, skill and intelligence, responses to duty and subordinations of the flesh. God moves in history; but not for the rupture of human family. God inspires care for others; but not to assist slaughter. Yet, the belligerence apart, a modern state can teach, preserve and help its citizens with a thoroughness and an equity never reached by Christian charity in its utmost piety. National states, their organisation, their science, their loyalties, are cities-to-be in the kingdom of heaven. Yet, misled, deceived, they burn. And a hellish magnificence within the dusk lights a million tragedies in one.

At the end, beyond the undisguisable, the recognised catastrophe, and the desolations and immeasurable loss, will repentance come, and forgiveness of past enemies, in a resurrection of faith? I do not know. I was never a prophet. At an age of under thirty I saw the wars to come only as distant threats, little nearer than Wells' invasion from Mars. I wanted vision merely to solve for myself life's harassing puzzle, and have an understanding to rest upon. I wasted no moment that brought me toward faith. Ceasing to depend on Tolstoy alone, I read Pascal, Tauler, and à Kempis on "Life touched by God;" and began to discover how much there was to know about the Catholic saints, and about a Father Dolling, a Sister Dora, a John Woolman. I was making use of Tolstoy to pass beyond him, and gain an added wealth, yet a wealth that would be beggary if it stayed at me.

LIVING PICTURE

I

HAD I died at the age of Keats I would have gone from the world in ignorance of the greatest figure in world history. Jesus, to me, had been a piece of church furniture, and a secularist's target. I was still in my teens when *The Freethinker* printed an article from me ridiculing the idea of Christ as the prince of peace. At that time it seemed possible to believe that the gospels were transcriptions of miracle plays, invented by monks gathered together for priestly defence against the ignorant, after the fall of the Western Empire. In any case, the truth about the gospel hero now mattered nothing. Perhaps the original figure stood for a real person; if so the man was an impostor, or self-deluded. He was a mischievous dreamer, an unnatural fanatic, an ineffectual angel, and now merely the centre-piece of a fading superstition. Christ, for me, was dead and buried.

Leaving Jesus behind, I had gone forward like other rationalists (as I thought) when chapel-going, Yorkshire socialists challenged me with new claims. Jesus, they said, was a socialist. Jesus had befriended the poor, scourged the rich, and died a martyr for his faith in God's fatherhood and human brotherhood. With an interest more curious than hopeful, I returned to the New Testament. I came to the miracles, and met at once the old atmosphere of ecclesiastical unreality. This was a graveyard, a place of dust and ashes; while in Francis Adams' socialist poem, *The Mass of Christ*, the streams of to-day ran freshly through living woods.

The name of Christ has been the sovereign curse;
Fooled by a dream we bowed to worse and worse;
In heaven, we said, he will confound the strong.
O foolish treason that has tricked too long!

From ancient illusions and the encumbrances of historic failure—

His words outlived him, like swift poison
Withering up truth, peace and pity . . .

—it was good and necessary to turn to the living world.

But Tolstoy, three or four years later, could not be denied. Everything in him came to me as new; and though he seemed great

enough to be his own authority, always he pointed to the gospels and the teaching of Christ. Moreover, his way with these books was simple and free. He used them. What were they but human recollections written down years after the events, and copied and translated! Take them, he said, for what they are worth. Regard nothing in them except what you find to be clear. When by reading and marking you have got a body of understanding, forming the gospel *for you*, let that content interpret the rest. Never allow misreporting or your own prejudice to deprive you of anything which your own heart and mind can feel and know to be valuable to your own life now.

The "Moffatt" of that time, a *Twentieth Century New Testament* had appeared; and doubtful gain as it might be to read "happy" for "blessed," "recognise" for "know," and "overcome by sleep" for "heavy with sleep," the literary cheapening at least enabled me to read the gospels as from a newspaper. Bound in green cloth, the slim volumes looked like text-books; I could read in tram-cars and trains and no piety be suspected. And now that I read in earnest I saw Jesus to have been no invention, no sun god. These little books were biography, intimate history. Once, certainly, Jesus had lived, He had spoken at street corners. Interruptions and objections had been flung at him. Sympathisers had lingered to question him less publicly; new friends had invited him to a meal. Talking to whoever would listen, gathering wayside crowds, obstructing traffic, offering new ideas, shocking his relatives and alarming the authorities, this Son of Man had been as much alive in Palestine as any of us socialists agitating and opposing current beliefs and practices in England.

Annotating and referring, I read continuously—read and understood, and forgot myself in the increasing reality and power of the story. This Christ was no Krishna, "out of countless eyes beholding." His humanity was plain. And he was greater than the gentle Buddha. Gotama, though I loved him, I felt to be of stained glass. But Jesus was dramatic. The Son of Man lived in conflict, and above the conflict. Why had I never before followed his stark struggle against the world of hateful power?

To-day I see that I was arriving too hastily. By continuing to ignore the Old Testament, I was missing what every first Christian possessed. That major quantity in the Bible I had consulted at boarding school only for apparently improper words, pointed out with secret delight by companions in compulsory Sunday morning

readings. After that the Old Testament had declined to a history of Moses and of old laws and dead kings, all without interest. I had not guessed the profundity of its story of man—*male and female created he them*—made in “our image, after our likeness.” I had not found the tendernesses flowing even in Deuteronomy; nor the very modern questioning of Job, nor the pity in the book of Jonah, nor the poetry of the heart in Isaiah; for the prophets stayed beyond my range. Even while Jesus lives in himself, detached, he completes a movement of age-long power and beauty. There was more than a rod out of the stem of Jesse. There was seed scattered through all the old books, and a springing up of green shoots, and, amidst that richness, the gospel flower. All this I had still to discover. At twenty-six, the bloom I saw I was content to accept as if it grew in air, without roots. Nevertheless, what I looked upon was real.

I read on; and the force of the passion, trial and crucifixion especially took hold of me. Tolstoy pointed to the teaching, including the Sermon on the Mount. This was not enough. Christ in travail for God and man was the word in action; the Sermon made flesh. During short business journeys which daily took me from the centre of Manchester, with my book I could shut myself off from all the world, and be alone in an auditorium looking only upon the teaching of Jesus in its final truth. This was the heart of the gospel, the drama that Saint Paul had ever before his eyes; and it took me beyond Tolstoy.

II

Over a period of four or five years I read and publicly discussed the teacher I had been led to find; and if familiarity began to make faith too cheap and easy, forty subsequent years have brought amendment. This is not saying that any hour of study was misspent. I wanted no enshrined relics. My need was for a Jesus alive in my time, talking to my generation, a diamond we could use, a chart, a diagram, a moving picture of the meaning of life. There is a Jesus who lends himself to use, and I studied him. But there is, also a Christ who can swiftly bring the self-confident to shame. Emptied of our endowment by the maker of all things, we are nothing. But the soul that remains both his and ours is, measured by Christ, worse than nothing. We are not the word made flesh, but the flesh that ends in words. We are shallow soil, the man with one talent; the son who said “I go, sir,” and went not; the priest at a safe distance; the adulterer at heart; or any one of the deceits lit and seared by the lightnings of that judge. There is a Jesus who exalts, and a Christ who at the end of a lifetime throws us back into sole

dependence on his mercy. I searched for the first; but glimpses of the abasing Christ have come unsought.

The miracles of the gospels, as I read, I put aside. In the sense of things to be argued over, I still leave them out. That the dead may walk I do not doubt. As Pascal said, for a man again to be is less wonderful than that he should have been at all. There is a daily miracle of the living world, and the only question is, how far does the marvellous extend? It is not necessary to draw conclusions from modern reassessments of the truth about St. Joan or St. Francis of Assisi, or St. Teresa, or Lourdes, or Holywell, or from the increasing weight of the records of psychical research. Without these it is still easy to understand that the heights and depths of the possible are not yet measured, and perhaps are immeasurable. I had been told of answered prayer; and whether I believed or not, the evidence was more in favour of the claim than against it. The nineteenth century was cautious to accept. The twentieth must hesitate to deny. Nevertheless none of us may balance a budget by anticipating legacies or gifts. A lower reckoning, nearer to our deserts, is the proper reckoning. Moreover, we live in this world, and the supernatural is to us as the oceans are to untravelled aborigines at the centre of an arid continent.

Although I accepted him too lightly, the Christ of judgment and damnation I did not put away. Judgment is here. Damnation is here. The hell that a Caiaphas, a Pilate and a Judas could unite to freshen, has not ceased on earth. Jesus did not philosophise about these things, as he did not explain the Father's care for sparrows while permitting towers to fall on men. Like a fireman at a fire, or a life-boatman in a storm, he postponed discussion. It was enough to be undismayed, to see every contradiction as within the truth of the Father's love, and to draw from denial new energy of belief.

Yet the question is fair, precisely what belief? Love—for the sheep; and, for the goats, everlasting fire? On their own internal evidence all the parables are authentic; but even from the artist of the gospels I was free to accept nothing inconsistent with the whole body and movement of the story and with life as, through the gospel, I could now understand it. We find what we seek. Those who are so strangely proud of believing in the finality of death, and are resolute in scorning and deriding any contrary hope, could not complain of extinction as their end. I have met such men; and there may be others whose hearts (and not their minds only) are so much prouder and harder that they would choose to continue in hell rather than surrender the pride of self-will. For them no brief

candle! Whatever the cost, for them the blaze, always, and however Satanic! There may be such men, and Jesus may have fathomed their destiny.

But the cruel Christ of Michael Angelo's *Last Judgment* accords neither with the Jesus of "Father forgive them" nor with the meaning in life which Christ has revealed. In the history of the world, few, perhaps, have been so indomitable in malice as to earn any right to age-long punishment! For many of us, preferring some easy, final death to the utmost of peril, toil and pain, the worst just fate would be a sojourn in Dante's Limbo. From the story of the sheep and the goats, therefore, I drew only what was, to me, reasonably and consistently true; while the secularist attack on Jesus for teaching self-mutilation I could only dismiss. Surgeons mutilate; and polar explorers must turn eunuchs for the time; and to neither activity does any of us object.

And Jesus declared his own limitations. No one historic figure could be both historic and for all time, in every detail, all-sufficing. The spirit to come, the completing spirit, was he who would "teach you all things." I had never imagined myself reading with appreciation of its clarity that document damned on freethought platforms, the Athanasian creed; but it was this body of dogma which confessed Christ to be "inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood." What a number of things were unknown to him—news-papers, photography, cinemas, spectrum analysis, radiograms, the circulation of the blood, tinned foods, planes, bombs from the air! Did he guess the secrets of cancer, or whether the earth was round or flat? The odd thing is that no ignorance of this kind diminishes him. It is the secular which is put in its place. Intelligence is more than the body, said Pascal, and charity in the heart is more than intelligence. The three orders of being differ in kind; and highest in the holiest is Christ. "He did not invent," but "O! in what wonderful splendour he is come to the eyes of the heart, which behold wisdom!" More than the word, Jesus was, in his order, the picture of God, the true, the very image!

III

We make our peace with the world and love to be let alone. Jesus expresses God in action, the real Father, who interferes with our settled ways, challenging, altering, and breaking to make. But the tremendous, rural workman in little, unknown Nazareth—and from my first reading this went deep with me—waited his hour. Aware of himself, he was content to be nobody. He could have

been a prodigy, could have spoken, written, learned while he taught. When you are twenty-five and sure, is it not death to stay inactive, silent? Why not a first show of strength through war, business, science or art?

Temptation began early, where, from the hills, the mountains of Asia and the sea joining Europe and Africa offered the grandeur of East and West. But Jesus stayed at home. And the world passed by, Galilee being a road. I, at my desk in Manchester, have met men of twenty nationalities, white, "yellow," black, brown. Of course, they did not come to see me personally; and the world did not visit Nazareth. It was the unknown who could look upon the world. The parables tell us this; yet even the parables do not convey the irony of the contacts: the important people from Egypt and Jerusalem, Syria and Persia, Athens and Rome; and, so unsuspected in an ordinary carpenter in an unheard-of town, the eyes of God measuring rulers called "benefactors!" Those wolves! That fox! But, also, the spiritual children of Abraham, faithful, from East and West!

Jesus waited; but not for any popular election. Only once was he voted upon, as the story tells. He waited, hid in that silence which the earliest and latest evangelists humbly accept. Paul, Augustine, Francis, proceeded by trial and error. When the Baptist struck the hour, from being nothing, and without sermon or miracle, Jesus at once stood forth and was recognised. Whence came that already-formed character? Whence the awareness of it? But the hand is on the plough; and the dead may bury their dead; for there is no looking back. A thousand times has Jesus entered the synagogue; but it is to-day that the scripture is fulfilled. And it is a scripture for man, since the reader deliberately omits from this initial manifesto the prophet's "day of vengeance of our God."

With authority Jesus calls the disciples, and unhesitatingly they obey. But why Judas? Was the calling of Iscariot, after all, an act of trial and error? And when that first rapture, that joy to be alive in such an hour, had waned, and treasury troubles were increasing, what did that fellow to us think about it all? This lack of planning, this eating here, and there not eating, this casualness which left the Son of Man with nowhere to lay his head! But it pleased Judas when the thousands were fed. To discern the provision that so many had made, and to pool and divide all those private resources—that was clever! The Lord could master and govern any crowd. But why with that impossible sermon spoil half the popularity? Turning the other cheek, and then giving to Caesar! If

such unnatural meekness was to be the counsel and practice, what hope would there be for the freedom of the Jewish nation? It could only mean surrender to the foreigner, to oppression, to evil.

Judas must have felt early doubts about the national deliverer, and an anger which he dared not show.

Others listened to the lakeside talk and felt no doubts. They were wiser and surer than a preacher who, obviously, was a provincial of provincials. Was this not the son of a certain rustic Joseph? And is not this the ordinary world, where birds are birds, lilies, lilies, and any man of sense keeps the coat he needs? "Very poetic," said a philosopher, "but lacking the substance of connected thought." And at the idea of miscellaneous giving, a merchant tittered. Meanwhile, an officer frowned. "If that fellow had experience in handling men," he thought, "he'd find out what things are."

But many had doubts that kept them silent, doubts not of the speaker, doubts of themselves. *Be ye perfect!* Who could rise to it? Only such a man as the preacher himself. We, they humbly felt, are not good enough. We are weighed by his words and found wanting. To this man alone all things are possible! He is god-like. Yet he believes in us . . . he loves us!

There was but one Christian, said Nietzsche, and he died on the cross. And it is true that only for one man was the whole Sermon on the Mount entirely practicable. But that one man so believed in common men as to demand from everybody the same love which he himself embodied; and this faith, this godlike trust, came to listeners like bread from heaven; and they discovered in themselves, fresh and wonderful, the courage of the humble. And the disciples saw and believed. Only a Son of God could scatter pearls so, and transform in the scattering all with ears to hear.

Nothing about Adam appears in the Sermon, and nothing about a Fall. No doctrine of atonement; no apologies for a Father whose self-limitations compel him to suffer this and that. Neither is there any hint of gradualness through evolution, through eugenics, through transition from a class state. Every preface to loving goodness and daily fraternity, Jesus Christ omitted. The voice from heaven spoke immediately of love now. That was enough. Men have pretended additions; but these are subtractions disguised. Century after century, adding to has taken away. To the supreme man the only heretic, reactionary, deviator, is the man who fails in loving kindness. And what that meant and means, he, the Son and living picture of God, made clear for ever in his parables.

The parables are inexhaustible. Yesterday I read one of the fifty

perhaps for the fiftieth time; and it came as if spoken only an hour ago. The chief of artists is not Shakespeare, Dante or Rembrandt. He is Jesus. That art which Tolstoy described, confessing it to be almost beyond his reach, Jesus practised daily, and casually, not troubling about collected works or any book. But the quality demonstrates the author. All the Old Testament writers together could not equal this divine art. *With many such parables spake he to them, but to his disciples he expounded . . .* Peter, it seems, talking to Mark, recalled these stories still a little impatiently. Solid exposition was so much more satisfying than stories!

Other causes made Peter uneasy. Undoubtedly the Master was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Yet, the Lord being so much, was it always wise, humanly wise, for him to mix so very freely? Foreign officers, tax gatherers, Samaritan women, tiny children, lepers and even prostitutes—there was no limit! So devoted, good, and very sober, Peter was already something of a bishop. But neither Socrates nor Buddha, and still less any modern political saviour, was or is so catholic as Jesus Christ. The Pharisees whom he lashed he was ready, on any sign of grace, both to eat with and be indebted to for the comfort of the meal. If Jesus was the Christian agnostic, dismissing the problem of why Heaven had allowed Pilate to kill God's chosen even while they sacrificed to God, so he was also the Christian materialist. The good things of earth *were* good. And they were for man. So the Son of Man plucked ears of corn even on the Sabbath, and blessed bread and wine, and communicated bodily health, and sighed for a home and a bed, and ate and drank until the refined pretended to be horrified by a glutton and a wine-bibber.

What did not occur to anyone, apparently, in A.D. 28, was to pity the virginity of Jesus. It was D. H. Lawrence, in our own day, who would have saved Christ from that! Brooding upon him often, with sympathy or rage, Lawrence could not bear "The Risen Lord" to be "essentially womanless"! "The Man Who Died" must rise naturally, to secret nuptials. Would not Jesus have pitied the simplicity? Men and women overawed by Christ's virginity never doubted the equal fact of his flesh and blood. It shamed the men of desire even while they left him alone with the adulteress. Passionate Magdalen loved both natures in one, and so did the disciple on Jesus' bosom. *A man shall cleave to his wife . . . they twain shall be one flesh.* The hecklers who heard a young man quote these realistic words never questioned the maturity of that man's understanding, and his competence to discuss every question of divorce.

From the gospels of the twentieth century, the evangelists of the first would have little to learn.

IV

In this happy world, the world of mountains, lakes, birds, flowers, of stirring crowds and desert solitude, of festivities and companionships, Jesus prepares the intimate few for his coming death. They are bewildered. Has he not urged them to believe? And they do believe. He, if he is threatened, can reply with heavenly fire. He has but to speak and angelic legions will be at his command. The masses already are with him. They are thronging from Jerusalem to cry, Hosanna to the King! A small triumph, so far—one man on an ass and his own twelve on foot—yet a sign! For what sort of world would it be if Pilate and Herod could have power and not the Son of God! But Jesus pities while he accepts the homage of the crowd. It was as well-meaning and childlike a populace which saw Elijah in flight, Micah beaten and starved, Jeremiah sunk in the pit of dung, Uriah pursued and killed, Zechariah stoned within the temple itself. Herod slew the Baptist, and what had the people done to save that great prophet? No man has viewed his end more humanly than Christ.

Jesus is fully man . . . and it is spring. In the city set on a hill, the air is clear and sweet, and the evening sun on the white walls also burnishes the gold of the temple. In the metropolis of faith, amidst the beauty of devotion, the unspeakable doom he marvellously puts away. Like a pilgrim and sightseer, he "looked round about on all things." And then, Bethany. But to-morrow, as if the world were not against him, but were eager to learn, he will spend himself in teaching.

God is no less feminine than masculine; and Jesus is virile as well as feminine. While he takes interest in weddings and wedding garments, and loves children, and accepts love, and permits tears, he also cuts like a sword through family claims; and he rebukes and scarifies and thunders. Then, during these last, swift-running days in Jerusalem, did he start a riot? Even while convicting offenders, did he, by striking them, upsetting their property, and giving thieves their chance, also put himself in the wrong? Did he make it possible for the priesthood to say, "This man's popularity has gone to his head; the blasphemer is now violent?"

That Jesus shamed the customary avarice of the money-changers, and that the volume of indignation against them turned shame to fear, I do not doubt. There would be a hasty packing up, a confusion, probably a stampede. But Jesus as the turbulent leader of a mob

which would have included elements as eager for pickings as for rough justice, I do not see. The story is not in character. And as the Holy One meets the Pharisees in the Temple and watches the piety of some of whom the poor have told him, I hear the irony about the pretence in their long prayers. But the vituperation of "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers!" I do not hear. These words are ascribed, first, to the Baptist; and they are in keeping with the camel hair, and the locusts in the desert, but not with Jesus.

A thousand prophets have denounced. Only one has held up the mirror to present evil, and to wars, falsehoods and iniquities to come, so finely and truly that none could have excuse not to see.

The crowded, brief days pass. They are days of tension, of deepening crisis, of intense effort; yet, strangely, they are days of pity and love, and of serenity, as if the Lord freshly has come down from the hills, and now is commencing his mission, in all its confidence and joy. At last, in the Upper Room—and Paul often must have lamented his own, blind absence—Jesus draws his little congregation to the Father, to himself, and to the Spirit to come. We have the picture from the disciples; and they show Jesus towering above themselves; and therein is its truth. For they are still eager for thrones and power; and they produce two swords; and Peter protests his passion. Jesus has been playful about swords; but now he sees the danger, and says, "Enough!" Peter must know the very different weapons, and the different courage in using them which are required. It is sufficient, now, to say, with such tender irony, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake?" Undying, piercing words, sharply pointed for each of us! And now, to make his way of war unmistakable, Jesus acts his last parable. A king would not be found cleaning boots, nor a general waiting on his officers, nor the head of a business polishing the desks of his clerks. But the Saviour of the World washes the feet of the disciple who will deny him, of the disciples who distressed him, and (as Tolstoy noted) of his betrayer. No marvel in the skies could be so explicit. Yet the meaning is made clearer still. He gives bread and wine. They are the symbols of himself in all his giving; they are himself broken in giving; and, given, they are the food of love. The parable is complete.

But Judas, the man of action, is defeated, and is bitter. How can he stay as he is and endure such terrible grace? And he will be himself; for the day of judgment in his soul is not yet come. He will be Judas, the one man bold enough to reject this anti-climax. The triumph at the gate was meagre enough; but it was genuine. Let

the all-powerful Master be compelled to choose, victory or death, and the lofty sons of Abraham will see a revolution, and the Kingdom begun! And then righteousness will be established in the only way possible in the present world. To force the event—*That thou doest, do quickly . . .* So the Master wills it! And Judas goes.

And now, from him who sees himself betrayed from within, who knows himself soon to be denied and deserted, what follows is not cynicism and despair. It is music and beyond music; it is a harmony of love and wisdom; it is the grandeur and beauty of the creation issuing in the only words adequate as a sequel to the singing together of the morning stars. A peacefulness wells in, the deepest that man has felt. Over this little assembly, the Spirit of all truth, who is infinitely to extend (yet not alter) the understanding of God imaged by the incarnation, already broods. All, by consent, are moved to sing. The hymn ends; and toward a garden that he knows, in the spring air, Jesus proceeds. The eleven follow in wonder.

Moonlit and mysterious, there on its hills is the city, and there the priests and lawyers and high patriots sit in conspiracy. "We are not against any man of the people," they say. "We have given this Nazarene every chance. God knows we need a Messiah. But not one saying of himself what none should dare to think! And certainly not a Messiah crying down the leaders of his nation, and confusing and dividing Israel!" . . . "The true leader will create a united nation, prophet, priests and people together. Rather than ruin this future, it would be serviceable to God to get rid of this fellow now." And they turn to Judas, who scorns them at heart while he takes their money. How pitiful their folly! thinks Judas. How little they know the real, the lion heart of Jesus! Yes, he, Judas, will lead their men, the sooner to see the heavens open, and the Son of God vindicated, and these enemies consumed in the day of wrath!

The adversaries are many; but Jesus is alone. He will not hide in Bethany; he will stay in this dangerous garden. The three chosen from the eleven are uneasy. Judas knows the Master's courage, and that to find him will be easy. The three are disturbed now; and, abashed by the calm of the Master and divided in their feelings, they pretend to sleep. Jesus is alone. On this hour all the future turns: the future for Stephen, Paul, Peter, James, the Saints, the heroic Fathers, Blandina and a multitude of faithful women, Boniface and all missionaries, the martyrs of modern Spain, Germany, Russia. Never has so much depended on one man and never did any man glory so little in martyrdom! The one true Christian is no stoic. He does not smile at blows and lacerations. Others will defiantly

die. Jesus consecrates our innocent desires for the happiness of this earth, and understands all our timidities. The prospect before him he has known with his mind. Now he feels it in his soul. The lying, the hatred, the execration, the mockery. The obscene, public shame, the disastrous failure, the desertions, the loneliness. Great warriors do not now die in war. They live to write their memoirs. But the true leader is first and solitary in facing a criminal's death. And the winter is past, and the time of the singing birds come. Jesus has but to retire beyond Jordan, and his friends will rejoice; and the authorities will be glad to forget him. Let the cup pass! But now, in every sort of crisis, two thousand years have repeated after him, *Thy will be done!*

Lanterns shine and torches smoke ruddily amidst the trees, and there is a noise of feet and of steel. Jesus stands up, the serene Christ of the Upper Room. What can Judas do, or the soldiers? Lead away the Lamb of God? Now they are ashamed. But the priests and leaders are skilled in those arts which, since Cain, have enabled outward refinement to express and serve inward rage. Their cup of poison they press to the lips of truth. Caiaphas presses it, and Pilate, an esoteric philosopher in his effort to divorce intention from act. And the people, angry, now, with a king who does not fight, and (like Peter) fearful of seeming to support a lost cause, turn on him who enfranchises the common man. No doubt it is true that the trial was hurried and irregular. On that day, at that hour, decent Jews were at home. And in how many crises have we, the quiet, moderate people stayed at home, and so have surrendered to the unjust our responsibilities and power? The Son of Man was murdered by the absentees, as well as by church and state, learning and letters, and the rude mob. And every Good Friday what we should repent of, solemnly and from the depths, is the whole of man's wrong to man, the collective, the sophisticated, the respectable no less than the callous, treacherous and brutal. Whatever the evil, *Ye have done it unto Me.*

My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me! It is the cup in its dregs. The judge on the bench, the chaplain, the hangman have the dregs before them; but they do not taste. Yet many taste when they cry, as in his hour every good man must, "Why hast thou forsaken us?" Once more, why are all these things permitted, the sufferings that destroy, and the worse things, the real, the intentional evil? There is but one answer. God is; His Will is; *before Abraham was I am.* For the mind this is the last, the final reply. But the cross carries more than a lesson for the mind. God not only is.

Together with his children, he suffers and endures. He is not lost in the skies. He is on the cross now. Amidst the tortures, the honest thief confessed Jesus. Never, perhaps, shall we reach to so much self-forgetful goodness. But for all of us who know the world, to stand near to God or the cross is better, even though we stand dumbly, like the poor women in their fidelity. If but for a little while (before we go away and forget) the heart is lifted up to him; and it can begin to feel (strangely) that in loving him the riddle is more than half solved, and that already we can rejoice.

It is finished, said the historic Jesus. "It is begun," the timeless Spirit responds.

V

Certainly this was a righteous man. Pilate's centurion was not moved by any quaking of the earth, any rending of rocks, any processions of the dead. Undisturbed in the observation of his charge, he went on with the work in hand. His impassivity in a detestable job only a greater marvel could have broken through. *Truly, this was the Son of God.* If the officer rose to this height, it was because of the sublimity of Christ in death. St. John Ervine, in his *Journey to Jerusalem*, has quoted the natural effects of deliberate sacrifice, as shown in the Dublin rebellion of Easter, 1916, when martyred leaders lit a fire that was not put out. Believing in the resurrection, we may still admit his point. If faith and hope could so revive from the deaths of men who themselves had taken life, what miraculous, physical reappearance was necessary for the victory of the stainless victim of the cross? *If they hear not Moses and the prophets . . .* The apostles did hear, to a greater than Moses giving their souls; and surely we slight them, and slight the whole picture in the gospels, if we think that for further persuasion they *needed* one to rise from the dead. It was as an added force, making assurance sure, that the undenied reports of the Lord seen and heard and spoken to, kindled into sudden flame the faith that week by week, and month by month, Jesus had created in his disciples' souls.

Again, remote from Christianity, countless men have seen in rotting flesh and scattered bones the earthly finality of death; and still they have held passionately to belief in the soul's continuance. Are we so slow of heart as to *need* so much more than they possessed? Truth is that which we have before us and alive within, and this alone can suffice to make Christ supernaturally sufficient. For the rest, we can recall and examine no contemporary witness, and can complete no first-century record. And if we could, and to our own satisfaction, what would be the gain? Legal proofs are not

begetters of love and faith. To believe in your friend is to believe when he is without success and under doubt. Even former enemies will cross over to a man whose success is established. Faith, says Kierkegaard, ceases to be faith when it feels the need of proof. So true Christian belief stands free of chapter and verse. No discrediting of an old manuscript, and no finding of a new, will affect its base and constancy. To what end is the glory of earth if the glory of our manhood is dead for ever? Death may be our deserts, but never was it proper for him. If Jesus perished, then the course of the universe has reached and passed its highest point, and for two thousand years, all has been downward. But God is the God of the living, and of the living Christ.

If our faith has grown from within outwards, this we shall believe. The risen Lord will be as real as a risen sun. Belief from this centre joyously mounts to unite with the apostles' historic faith. Justified by its inward rightfulness, affirmation will look calmly on the outward evidence, not as negligible, but as extra. Rationally, by the laws of evidence, is it for or against? If against, faith must rely on the power that is its own. If for, then loveliness is not created, for it already is; but it is confirmed.

So the evangelists must have felt when they collected and left unaltered their apparently contradictory stories. Serenely they could admit that "some doubted," and that "Pilate marvelled that he was already dead." George Moore, in *The Brook Kerith*, to assist his dogma of no life beyond the grave, made use of this care-free honesty; yet, also to maintain his narrow bounds, how compelled he was to falsify so much that proved so much less serviceable! By comparison, the gospels are minutes confirmed and signed as correct! Beyond all conflicts of observation and memory—such as men have been familiar with always—the evangelists rested secure in a deep consistency. *Lo I am with you alway . . . He took bread and blessed it . . . Lovest thou me? . . . Feed my sheep.* Except in the late addition to Mark, the risen Christ is one in character with the Jesus of Nazareth.

It is the same Jesus, with the same gospel; for the bodily resurrection fits into and confirms the regard for the body of the eating, drinking and healing Christ. God is a spirit, but a spirit unresting until animating a material creation; and Jesus rejected all faith that had no physical expression—feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, washing feet, pouring out precious ointments, consecrating bread and wine. Immortality must be substantial, too. Yet, appearing and vanishing, the risen body of the gospels is Saint Paul's celestial body.

It is that finer, subtler instrument which Richard Jefferies desired; it is a body such as that which modern physics makes understandable. To accept a visible resurrection, not coldly, as if it were a queer yet incontestable event, but with a full adventure of faith, is to enrich belief by anticipating its completeness. And, oddly, it is just this full-bloodedness of faith, this comfort and courage of heart, which is denied by precisely those who dismiss Christianity as pale and joyless!

Without physical sight, faith can revive and conquer: *Blessed are they which have not seen . . .* But there is no doubting that with what answered to sight, faith did more suddenly and sweepingly return. Indeed, newly-fearless in Stephen, in Peter, in Paul, faith leaped up, exulted, and cried aloud. Yet even at this maximum, faith remained level-headed, not forgetting how crime can disguise itself as justice, and the faithful decline and desert. Heaven still was in the making, and not yet on earth.

He . . . sitteth on the right hand of God the Father. Then, must faith return to these ancient, cramping creeds? If the alternative is godlessness or any pious equivalent, for me the answer is, Yes. But the creeds were terms of victory after wars of the mind which, if renewed, might drive any believer back to words as stubborn. Let the ruthlessness of controversy be past and we can relax. We can then admit that human assertion, in conflict with human denial, too narrowly, or too colloquially, or too rhetorically expressed the divine truth. Jesus knew himself to be of God, one with the Father, begotten, as we say, and not created. This awareness, this rebuking stainlessness (not of this world) secured, well may we qualify the old expressions, remembering how natural knowledge has been enlarged, and how Jesus himself declared that the whole truth about the Father and his will he did not know.

So, then, God is still one—and three! How we secularists ridiculed such absurdity! Of Kierkegaard's profound sense of the place of the absurd we had not even the shadow of a notion. But now I know the doctrine of the Trinity as framing the largest and most luminous of human apprehensions. Curiously, it is the least dogmatic, for it contains within itself an ever-enlarging and amending (but never reversing) force. *When he, the Spirit of truth is come . . .* Jesus entered into history purposely to relate himself to God's process and human reactions in a definite and unmistakable way. Not even by man could his death on the cross be turned into a worldly coronation. But he saw how the incarnation would fix the outward picture, and how we would try to walk in his steps, and

how we would be found asking, What would Jesus do? So he sent us to that Holy Spirit which is as personal in relation to men as is the Father Who made us persons. One with the Father and the Son, yet so distinct that men even may be Christian without Christ, never will the Spirit contradict the parables and teachings and all the loving revelation of Jesus; but never will that be of Christ or his church which contradicts the Spirit.

Do I seem to know all about it? If so, the impression is false. Here, alas, is no inspired soul. All I can tell you is this: of the meaning of life our instincts from the Father speak; and every impulse which has ever lifted us above ourselves speaks also; and with either voice, and nothing else, we can do more than make shift. But for completion, and the glory of completion, we must join each to each and both to Jesus Christ. And that sun, that world of mountain and ocean, I have not shown you and cannot show. All I can offer is that which appears through my own little window, mean, cracked and smudged as it is.

Chapter VIII

CHRISTIAN ANARCHISM

I

IN a private letter of the year 1900, Tolstoy recommended a young disciple to concern himself with his own, inner development rather than with Tolstoyan propaganda. At twenty-four the advice was puzzling. It was Tolstoy who showed a world everywhere needing correction, and, if not propaganda, what was the instrument? Moreover, the missionaries were in the field and active. Railway book-stalls were distributing the great writer's own pamphlets in the well-produced, threepenny editions of the Free Age Press founded by Tolstoy's exiled friend, Vladimir Tchertkoff, and his competent English partner and publisher, A. C. Fifield. And through that pioneer, spare-time compilation by the civil servant, Joseph Edwards, *The Labour Annual*, I heard of a Tolstoyan colony amongst the different, small, socialist settlements in Essex. To detach oneself from all this stir and work was impossible.

The countryside at this time was continuing to empty itself into the towns; for agricultural prices had barely passed their modern

lowest, and farming remained depressed. The socialist or free communist townsmen persisting in their counter-movement back to the land were but a valiant few; but they maintained the nineteenth-century faith in home colonies. At Purleigh, in Essex, the Tolstoyan community, on its twenty-three acres, stood for the active faith of a Brotherhood Church founded in Croydon by J. C. Kenworthy, the author of *The Anatomy of Misery*. Convinced of the falsity of an acquisitive society, and of the need to make a new start based upon Tolstoy's doctrine of bread labour, the Church had purchased and equipped this small holding and provided a margin for working expenses. From October, 1897, the colonists dug, built, planted and harvested, working eight hours daily, yet gradually absorbing their credit balance.

Tolstoy's translator, Aylmer Maude, had followed the migration as a friend and helper; and in 1899 I found the neighbouring address of Wickham's Farm, Danbury, Essex, at the foot of Maude's preface to Tolstoy's *What Is Art?* At this date I had not escaped from the pleasant, carpeted office of the multiple, sham Old English money lender; and my hunger for a more honest and natural life was inversely proportionate to my distance from it. I was ready to fling myself into any land work dedicated to brotherhood. But the reply to my first letter to the colony invited no sudden action. The eighteen-months-old settlement was not yet self-supporting. The £70 remaining in the bank was required for covering the extra needs of eight or nine people. Purleigh could not afford to add to its unskilled labourers. But perhaps I could learn bootmaking. Meanwhile I was welcome to visit and enquire.

I felt uneasy about subsidised work; and a Danish colonist at Purleigh wrote in gentle but definite correction. Money itself was indefensible. Why, therefore, discriminate between this money and that? Let us seek love and fraternity, and all dependence on money will find its end! "But of all this," he added, "I will tell you, dear comrade, when we meet personally."

My visit to Purleigh, in 1899, was enriched by June's best. At a rural station I left a rural train amidst the quietude of the railway age. Here in Essex, with the roads as innocent of machines as the Garden of Eden, I was further from London than in Lancashire. Under the elms and the hedgerow wild roses, I walked in a world left to sunshine and to me. Wickham's Farm received me as a friend. Aylmer Maude was there, a father in Tolstoy, and the secretary of the colony, a strong-looking young man in shirt and breeches. That evening, by a footpath through meadows, we all

came to a house that Kenworthy and others had built with their own hands. Colonists and friends gathered here as one family, women in cotton frocks, men in working clothes, and a few children. There was conversation and music; women knitted or sewed; and Kenworthy read aloud from *Brer Rabbit*. Facing a window I could be aware of encircling, quiet fields, of distant woods, of a sea-like width of sunset. This was an island of kindness and peace. With Maude, and with Mrs. Maude, in whom experience and sensitive knowledge added dignity to homeliness, I returned to the lamp-lit farmhouse, rich in the spirit of a midsummer holiday.

It was proper that even a waiting candidate should be tested; and when I called on J. C. Kenworthy I was taken in hand. The spiritual leader of the colony sat at an easel, painting very deliberately, and with his eyes upon his apparently so careful work, between each stroke of the brush he threw at me some new, transfixing question. That I was a moneylender's clerk I did not dare to reveal. It was bad enough to confess to the difficulty of reconciling one's generous ideas with the necessity of competing in the labour market for a living. Head of a movement generated in a well-to-do London suburb, the tall, severe man at the easel was free, and as one who could neither understand nor tolerate any failure to find personal freedom he spared no arrow. Did I not admit the falsity of existing economic and social relations? Could any man live by falsehood? Was not truth life, and life truth? Could I not trust to truth for my living? Would God, being absolute truth, let any man serve truth and starve?

In the cold clarity of the north-lit room, my penitent form was placed where my interrogator could throw his questions over his right shoulder, one by one; while I sat like a small boy caught.

Actually, the founder of the colony represented, in this inquisition, the spirit that already was disintegrating his own creation. Three or four colonists and their friends, almost as doubtful as myself, would have been content with a successfully self-supporting, collective market garden. Theirs to put the world right to this extent. Men of limited vision, they were rebuked by a majority. Was it for such a back-door return to commercialism that the colonists had come out from the world of capitalistic gain? Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven! For the majority it was not a basic commandment, for commands were not admitted, but it was the ultimate wisdom, repeated to me by a young colonist striding the Essex clay, or heard in this cottage and that where argument seemed to be the farm's chief produce.

At Purleigh the initial age had begun: S.Q. stood for Sex Question, and K.o.G. for Kingdom of God. The contractions facilitated discussion, but, although a sinner, I had been brought up to work; and hours of talk during a morning I felt to be no better than after-breakfast card-playing. The men of earth in the community no doubt had a similar dislike. Defeated in their desire to develop the few acres and set a limit from time to time to the number of persons accepted as dependent members, the collectivists proposed a division of the properties. The seekers were hurt. "No!" they protested. "We can own nothing!"

"In being above all property-holding," a colonist told me, "I feel so happy, so rich!"

II

I returned from Essex eager again for less questionable work, but not more eager to join a colony. After the first effort had succeeded, however (and in the co-operative offices I had an honest though still unsuitable place), it happened that my heavy hand was chosen for the mechanical part of writing business cheques in triplicate. Typewriters were soon to do this work, but not yet. And I continued to be a serious reader of the then Tolstoyan journal, *The New Order*, and of pamphlets marked "Free to those not using money." Money—it was argued—is the fit instrument of distrustful self-regard. It stands for our refusal to give unless assured of getting, and for our fear of not getting. Through the use of money, we show that we neither believe in our neighbour nor in a universe led on by the power of love. At the same time we can see that men have only to give in the ways natural to health and happiness and, without the force of laws, as freely they would be able to receive. There would be enough and to spare. The dream of the socialist would be realised—"not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." But the better practice must be initiated, and built up into habit. Therefore, be voluntarily penniless! And Purleigh colonists described in print their successful, moneyless tramps across England.

So the transforming faith would work; and since the way was open we should refuse to live on any other terms. As my hand served instead of the nimble fingers of the typists to come, I pondered the injunction. The amounts that I filled in were enormous, and my failings seemed dire in proportion. My hand was not Macbeth's but perhaps no fist in England just then was so confronted by misdeeds accumulating so heavily!

Purleigh crumbled. The publisher of *The New Order* and first publisher in English of Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, left the colony for London and his satirically-named "Bomb Shop," in Charing Cross Road. Others back in London continued in propaganda with a Tolstoyan Society, and a monthly *Tolstoyan*, which, later, challenged derision as *The Crank*—"A little thing that makes revolutions." Interest shifted to the Whiteway Colony in Gloucestershire, where on forty-one purchased acres an heroic start had been made with a ceremonial burning of the title deeds. Yet the Essex settlement continued on the Tolstoyan map until newcomers from industrial Lancashire, having starved through a winter in a barn, went down with smallpox introduced by tramp guests. Local health authorities took action, and the adventure ceased.

Even in the year 1900, when I went again to Essex, there was no pilgrimage to Purleigh. My hosts again were the Maudes, but in the village of Great Baddow, nearer to Chelmsford and London. As a coloniser, Aylmer Maude, who so diplomatically had assisted in England and Canada the voluntary mass transfer to the Dominion of seven thousand Russian, Christian Communist and pacifist Doukhobors, was a Moderate, and could have been nothing else. Nature and training had made him a politically-minded, business-like, middle-class, English Liberal. During his years in Russia he had become the Moscow director of an important British company; and his intention had been to save money, retire to England at a reasonably early age, and commence a political career.

Then, as a casual guest, Maude went to Tolstoy's Moscow home. Like other people he noticed the incongruous comfort of the house; but in this case the direct sincerity of his questioning more deeply affected his host. Tolstoy took him aside and explained the position. Maude understood; and during continued visits the Englishman's clear, unprejudiced mind entered into the lucidity of the ideas of the artist-philosopher—apprehended without prejudice—and his integrity supported Tolstoy's still greater sincerity and moral force.

Aylmer Maude, the son of an Anglican vicar, was not emotionally religious, and his artistic feeling was less, I think, than that of Mrs. Maude; but the genuine quality of his character attached him to the Russian master as disciple and friend. To renounce money-making and the political future was, for him, a real and great sacrifice. This offering he had made, and then in England, ready to be as Tolstoyan as his critical sense would allow, he commenced his disinterested and untiring presentation of Tolstoy's writings in English. There had been more poetic versions, especially of the

more poetic writings; but alike in library editions and in reputable cheap editions, Maude supplied a needed accuracy.

With Aylmer Maude I was never beset by the horns of dilemma. He welcomed me from the first as if I were the brother of his sons. In 1900 and later, amidst the timbered cottages, flint churches, wide cornfields, slow streams and high elms of the Essex countryside in its serenity, we walked and talked. And it was through these renewed intimacies that I began to discover the real and great Tolstoy, the man of heart and mind who was not the grand old fool of the lip-serving clever.

No disillusionment, I believe, caused any Purleigh immigrant to lament the upheaval which that search for rightness of life had meant; indeed, for one or two it was a valuable beginning. The regrets were those of the leaders and their sections for each other. Maude's sacrifices of time and money did not prevent Kenworthy and Tchertkoff (or Chertkov) from doubting his value. Was Maude ever really with the cause? Had the ex-director been at any time a true believer?

Tchertkoff every inch (and his physical stature was considerable) remained a Peter critical of a Paul. For Tchertkoff, whose influence at Yasnaya Polyana in 1908-10 was to be so decisively against Tolstoy's wife, and who would present his defence in 1922, in his book, *The Last Days of Tolstoy*, has seconded the prophet like none other. He, too, was an aristocrat born, an ex-officer in an exclusive regiment of Guards, a former figure at the Tsar's court, while, for an adhesion to Tolstoy complete to the last letter, he now knew an exile denied to Tolstoy himself. Near to Purleigh he had set up his Free Age Press at Maldon, Essex, until the decline of the colony caused him to move to Christchurch, in Hants. It was at Purleigh that I had met his partner, A. C. Fifield, whose wife, sister to Silas Hocking, had portrayed the Purleigh aims and oddities with sympathetic humour in *Belinda the Backward*. With a similar detachment, her husband half-approvingly tolerated the whole Tolstoyan movement, however penniless travellers used or misused his home. Now, as Fifield's guest I visited the Russian branch of the Press, at Tchertkoff's house.

To enter this modern and externally very English country villa was to be at once out of England. Here were printed the Russian, uncensored editions of Tolstoy's Christian Anarchist pamphlets sent out to reach the homeland over the frontiers, illegally. With Tchertkoff and his wife the printers sat down to Russian, vegetarian meals, one with us in form, but most of them away from us in

spirit. These were silent, determined men, political prisoners who had escaped by any means and who, when the hour came, by any means would return. The Tchertkoff, or Chertkov, whom he disliked, Maude has described in his *Life of Tolstoy*; but he has not conveyed the infectious warmth and the rare and appealing childlikeness of the big ex-captain of guards. The Russian and the Englishman were indeed oil and water, with the oil a fine, exotic ointment. Except as the protégé of his critic I was unknown to my Russian host, but the fact did not lessen the immediate, simple, welcoming kindness.

Tchertkoff became my guest in Manchester later, when he shuddered at the grime and the swathed, dull skies of the city; yet he accepted as if born to it the hospitality of a typically Victorian, bay-windowed, one-of-a-row, Manchester suburban home. The massive co-operative buildings appeared to interest him; but afterwards his doctrine corrected the impression. He had wondered at the size, as at the height of the dome of St. Paul's (he wrote) but then came the condemnation. "All which is founded on the sin of money, as now current, is founded on the oppression and murder of our fellow-men." Russian co-operators, some years later, sent over to these headquarters a portrait of Tolstoy burnt into birchwood, and with it the great writer's expressed approval of voluntary co-operative enterprise. To have been able to bring Tchertkoff before this engraving would have been interesting. However, his censure of my wage-earning was characteristically softened. "Yours," he wrote, "is a much milder infringement than mine."

"In the eyes of God," Aylmer Maude would confess, "we are all unprofitable servants;" and for his sincerity you felt complete respect. But when Tchertkoff so humbly admitted his "greatest failing" to be "that I have not learned to forgive," your feeling was one of either exasperation or love.

During its ten or twelve years of life, the Tolstoyan movement in England extended to Blackburn, Leeds and Derby, as well as in the South and in Manchester. The Blackburn group was distinguished by an entire rejection of money. Of one of the members a friend wrote: "She was a governess in a manufacturer's family but decided to have done with the commercial system and work for love alone. With nothing but a promise by one sympathiser to pay the rent, by another (a baker) to provide bread and cakes, she opened a school in a labourer's cottage, a few miles out of Blackburn. She asks no fees for the education. Parents can send necessities, or nothing at all if they are poor. I have visited the school twice, and

have never seen children so happy or children so loving their teacher."

Another adherent worked as an electrician, or more often starved; for exorcising the spirit of gain does not empty a currency of mechanical utility, and to tip out that baby with the bath is to deprive oneself of the socially-recognised mechanism for procuring shelter and food. Sympathetic gifts kept the moneyless members alive until their protest, whether noble or fanatical, recognised itself as having broken down.

We in Manchester visited the Blackburn Tolstoyans, their penniless leader, for the last word, hanging on to the footboard of the train by which we returned; and we met the Brotherhood Circle of Derby, in which town William Loftus Hare edited the most attractively designed of all the Tolstoyan journals, *The Candlestick*. During the South African War, W. L. Hare astonished Derby—for he held a good position in the town—by going to prison rather than pay income tax. "You will have the satisfaction of knowing that we are going to crush the Boers with this," the collector rashly had said to him, two years earlier. Thus invited to protest, the Tolstoyan taxpayer did so, verbally on the next occasion, and then by action. To the King's Remembrancer Hare wrote, "This year I simply stand still and advise the King's government to send the hat round to those who approve of their work." But the imprisonment was short. The many friends of the boldly-single, protesting pacifist quickly ransomed him, and (his dissent registered) the leader of the Brotherhood Circle returned to philosophy.

The Manchester Tolstoy Society commenced in that city's University Settlement with a lecture by Aylmer Maude. A total of some fifty members, at most, amongst the millions of people living in and around Manchester, was not a commanding body, but neither was it a group of the nearest fifty citizens. Hardly two members followed the same calling, and few were similar in their economic circumstances; while members who afterwards left the city became scattered over the world. The group almost epitomized the community around it, as every religious organisation should. During five or six years, without elected committee or officers, with no rules and no fixed subscription, the "society" kept together; while the active spirits discussed Tolstoy indoors, and out-of-doors explained his teachings to all who would listen. To gather audiences from the sheer space around park gates and in empty market places was not easy; but, once assembled, the listeners were patient and not unfriendly, even during the South African War.

The Society brought Tchertkoff to Manchester, and also Captain Arthur St. John, a spiritual descendant of the centurion at the cross, always wistfully hungry to make up in some fit manner for the incomes drawn by his forebears and his former self from beggared India; and the members discovered and helped refugees from Poland and Russia. The group corresponded with Tolstoy; and it survived his opinion, given (in English) in his reply, "that to be a member of the old Society that was started by God at the beginning of conscious humanity, is more profitable for oneself and mankind than to be a member of limited societies which we organise for attaining the ends which we are able to conceive." But the opinion was felt as a dissuasion, and the survival was not for many years.

Inspired by the greatest writer then living, the author of the world's acknowledged masterpiece of human observation, a Tolstoyan movement might have been expected to have become itself great, and internationally fruitful for centuries. The need of a fresh, Christian embodiment, coming from a grafting of dynamic, new realism on to the living stem of old, essential belief, was, and is, beyond description. The world fills its belly with husks, and it rages; lost and desperate. By the literary hero of a vast, virile country, already in revolution, should not the world have been fed? In 1902, when the Christian anarchist movement was still active, Dimitri Merejkowski, in the essay of which the English translation was *Tolstoy as Man and Artist*, voiced this profound need, and, in relation to it, criticised the insufficiencies of both Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. Their gifts must be combined and surpassed by the new saint for this age that Merejkowski trusted Russia to bring forth—a creator of "the Second Kingdom which is to complete and supplement the first, the Kingdom of the Spirit which is to come after that of the Son." If it did nothing for his hope, the ebbing away of the negativeness of the Tolstoyan movement confirmed Merejkowski's distrust.

Our affirmations are, in general, nearer to the truth than our denials; and with pure negations the Tolstoyan movement was overloaded. Little comes of being predominantly "anti." But of the failure this was not the only cause. Spiritual advances go as far as they are led, and not further. Tolstoy, in his spirit and at last in his going away, strove to be that which would have made him, negatively at least, a saint. Yet he was not a saint. Jesus Christ was an artist only for the active purpose wherein he was so much

more. Tolstoy, that magnificent artist, remained, however heroically, only a great literary man. When he deprecated his own writings, and all books, in spirit he went beyond those limitations which he knew this status finally to mean; but when he disclaimed the responsibilities of a religious founder and leader, however wisely, he surrendered to the appointment of his spiritual place. Beyond the limits of its hero's action, the Tolstoyan movement could not go. It, too, disclaimed responsibilities. And since the need was for religious leadership or nothing, the movement became nothing.

But, again, in its day it was no waste effort. In some degree it enriched other organisations, the Society of Friends, the Adult Schools, the Unitarians, the Anglican Church. It contributed to the rebirth of all forms of pacifism. And into organisations not professedly religious it sent individuals to work with hope and confidence in the meaning of life for themselves and their fellowmen. And to me, as one, it brought a positive and continuing gain, both religious and social.

III

Although I was no true-born Manchester man, the "sin" of being employed in writing cheques did not trouble me for long. Whether in Lancashire or Yorkshire, there are circumstances in which all of us would condemn reliance on money. Heaven may or may not include Michael and his fighting angels; but we would agree that it can keep no place for the man who always has his price. As for me, once I had passed to less uncongenial work I began to acquire an undesired reputation of being the only man in the crowd content with his pay. In my free time, whatever I most wanted to do I did without thought of gain. The whole problem of money then became one of degree. It was an elderly, Quaker lady who once told me gently that one should not only give but also receive with grace. If the virtue is present, the more we think of the work rather than the wage, and the more ready we are to give where the need is without bargaining for gain, the more we shall act in the moneyless spirit. The rest is doctrine only.

With the Tolstoyan refusal of all coercive force I felt the case to be different. I did not forget that my search for the meaning of life had begun with experience of social wrongs. A Munich correspondent with the Manchester Tolstoy Society, an American, protested that the conception of life as a process of spiritual birth must end in the common people accepting poverty, hardships and injustice as conditions to be endured for their spiritual good. It

might well prove to be nothing more than another brand of the old opiate; and under the influence of it non-resistance to evil would become only too easy . . . However, it would not be popular in Munich, where he found no one accepting non-resistance and few interested in Tolstoy.

Now, neither for Tolstoy nor for Jesus Christ did I mean to see people content with slums and with dependence on the soup-kitchens which about this time, for a poor area in South Manchester, a group of us voluntarily tried to provide. And as little did I mean to condone tyrannies that hurt me to the core. Was it possible to combine with this attitude a real acceptance of Tolstoy's denial of virtue in the spirit and practice of compulsion?

The Samaritan, the innkeeper and the wounded man gave and received without any political programme; and no religious truth demanded that I should cease to ask for others the better wages, better housing, education, guaranteed employment, sick pay and pension rights that the socialists amongst us had cried out for at street corners, and were to see, in part, established in this country by law. We were then building up forceful organisations and enlisting votes to compel such betterments; yet in the end the peaceful coming of the social legislation was to prove the absence of violence in the propaganda, and the full admixture of persuasion and goodwill. All such work, therefore, seemed to give scope for the most literal follower of the Sermon on the Mount.

It appeared, too, that the furthest socialist programme need bring no severing quarrel with any adaptation of Christian faith to the actual conditions in Britain, the immature London talk of barricades notwithstanding. In the northern regions then dominant in Labour politics, the British socialism at this time (before 1906) was the Fabianism of the idealists of the Independent Labour Party. It was a socialism of civil service. The mandate of a persuaded, effective majority of electors would be sufficient. Under its authority, without touching possessions naturally personal, the nation would buy out and take over all collectively-used, economic machinery; and these inherently social properties—this capital necessary to social life—would be held by the state and employed in trust for the whole community. Thus would be established, first a minimum standard of life, and then a continual spreading of an equal fullness of life to all citizens.

This revolution, this reservation for the nation of main resources previously privately-owned, would, on the whole, increase rather

than diminish personal liberty; and it would mean nothing more violent than a series of critical elections.

It was an English programme, belonging to our mild air, settled, suburban streets and perennially green meadows; but although it presented itself to the Tolstoyan so innocuously, after a time I could not avoid a question which was, indeed, an old question. Clearly, the fullness of life would not mean for individuals the leisure and luxury of the present idle rich. If the people were not to be falsely led, a reassessment of personal satisfactions must go with or precede the political change. This demand for a revaluation of life was as old as the Eastern sages, as old as St. Francis, as old in the West as John Woolman and Thoreau, and as old in modern England as Richard Jefferies, as Edward Carpenter on *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, and as William Morris's happy antithesis to the Americanism of Bellamy's *Looking Backward*. But the fading of the Labour Church, with the increasing importance attaching to organisers who concentrated simply upon the conquest of political power, proved that socialists were ceasing to challenge the worth, and not merely the distribution, of accepted wealth and present enjoyments. It was not for politicians to waste time on the lilies of the field. At last I began to think that it was in the nature of a struggle for political power to produce just that "bankruptcy of the socialist ideal" declared by Tolstoy in his now-forgotten book of 1900, *The Slavery of Our Times*.

Ends and means attract each other. Political power as an end, even power for the people, draws to it the spirit and the weapons of the warring world. The Paris Commune lay bloodily in history only thirty years behind the period of my reflections; and the civil wars, famines and barbarities of the Chinese and the Russian revolutions were but half that time in front. The Chinese travail was to be spoken of (in 1941) as a Christlike triumph through suffering. But millions were to die miserably far from triumph; and after thirty years of revolutionary struggles for power who was to possess any sure, enduring gain? Common goodness, like the green, covering grass, will grow on when anger and ambition are worn through; and it will heal what the fury of destruction has left; but this is a salvaging and not a triumph.

In the days of the Fabian outlook, a popular pamphlet was *Milk and Postage Stamps*. The socialist author contrasted the economic simplicity of the Post Office with wasteful, private milk deliveries. At this period of modesty in state activity, finance and taxation, it did not matter to him that the serviceable institution had not been

started for the public good, but had originated from the determination of Authority to control the correspondence of the King's subjects, and thereby the subjects themselves more effectively. In this time of the late nineteenth century, with the state then so weak against the undertakings and wealth of the subjects, the attitude of the seventeenth century seemed dead. None the less, the state in its dealings with subjects kept to the old forms not of request but demand. Now, in the mid-twentieth century, state growth during two world wars has made the question inescapable: when rulers and officials are, as against any one subject, masters indeed, will not the old spirit return? The conception of a state always serving and obeying the needs of the free becomes as unreal as the dream of a state that withers away. What is seen to be replacing it is something nearer to the authoritarian, heavily-armed, war-making and mass-manipulating totalitarian machine, in which the ordinary individual counts even for less than in the servile state pictured by Belloc.

This full problem was not yet mine; but, assisted by Tolstoy's perceptions, already I was in some way aware of it. Meanwhile I was immediately concerned with the programme of the trade union in which I was a local president, and the youngest, and no doubt least useful, member of the national executive. Voluntary action the Union declared, has failed to give justice to shop assistants and clerks. Fewer hours of work, better wages and other reforms must come from legislation. I could have added that the compulsion to be employed would amount to nothing more than a minor and harmless exercise of social discipline; but I would have been hampered in this by my realisation of it as only one detail in a whole socialist concatenation of enforcements, all liable to be stiffened by resistance. For now, in 1900, after six socialist years, I was becoming conscious of a still more determining force, a fixed state of mind. I was beginning to find it impossible to think of any social good to be done except through state or municipal or other authoritative large-scale organisations and their funds. The capacity to see a more social world began to appear only in terms of establishment and regulation by law; for all real faith in individual power was vanishing. The trust of a Barnardo or a Muller in enterprise for others already was, like walking on water, half fantastic.

Thus the faith in God coming in at my front door was stealing away from me at the back. Everything which I loved personally called to me as a free person; but on another side I was being moulded in spirit to a complete dependence on collectivist aims and plans, especially as to be authorised by the state.

IV

The two attitudes could not continue to coexist. During twelve months and more, that Tolstoyan idea of freedom in fraternity which was the reverse side of his refusal of coercive force, jostled in my mind (most unhappily) with the socialist conception of force justly employed by a socialised and socialising, electoral mass. And then a morning came when the stream of the mind resolved the conflict and ran clear. It was a holiday morning, in and outside a great railway station. For the first time in my life, it seemed, I looked on an ordinary English crowd. No police, no controlling officials; and no quarrels, no assaults, no robberies! Old people and children carried secure possessions; this person made way for that; relatives and friends met affectionately. If by accident one person obstructed another, he apologised. Different in immediate purpose, and strong in purpose, each group or individual took a self-chosen way, yet there was no challenge to the peaceableness of the whole.

Here was the reality of public order, an order not imposed and uniform but free, and arising from within. It was the public harmony from private action that Tolstoy desired; and since I could have seen and in later years did see crowds not dissimilar in various European capitals and big cities (Germany included) it was an orderliness in man himself, a strength for concord that all could develop.

A violent and exceptional crowd I had remembered; but a thousand other throngs I had seen without seeing. Now I read the parable. If men were shaped by organisation and law, more deeply they were the procreators of law. And man the law-maker came first. Though he were born a bandit, the law-creating force lay within him. It appeared in the taboos of primitive man, and in his simple communism; it lived in Rome and Catholic Europe; it was Puritanism in England, and Methodism, and modern, school-trained habits. All these were civilisation coming from within, state-making and not state-dependng. They were visible creations of innate powers, living by inherent strength.

I felt delivered as from a gaol. I looked on free men and walked with them, spiritually released. Democratic organising had called for continuous recruiting and drilling. Nothing could be done without meetings and a quorum. We had to bark at the unwilling and drag them to attend and vote. The majorities we secured stood only for an active few amongst the superior numbers of the unresponsive. Now I need not try to force the variousness of

human nature through the one machine. Responsibility for others would be met by being oneself, with God and one's soul for a sufficient quorum; and a meeting of only two or three could, and often did, become a joyful renewal of faith. To help, and not to force or injure: was this to lie down drugged? The drugging is in the injection of those modern political and economic ideas under the absoluteness of which the individual is made to think of the odd man as valueless and nothing. It is that inoculation which leads each to submit entirely to all the arrangements of and for the mass, and to every order of the day. It is that which creates courage only because the surrounding compulsions permit nothing except courage or death. But now I was drug-free; and I saw with new clarity, and felt awake with a new strength.

The moment of revolutionary freedom is the time when we must beware of new bonds. Freshness of energy and lightness of heart make it easy to accept, uncritically, not something wholly different from what we have rejected but the same thing inverted. Tolstoy himself, urged by critics clamorous for programmes and plans, thus burdened his own cause. Speaking in these opponents' own language, Tolstoy set forth his definite Christian Anarchism: refuse military service; refuse police service; pay no taxes. For a time, in theory, I followed my leader. I enjoyed my presiding; the Labour movement was growing; executive experience was an increasing asset. Yet I resigned my offices; and *The Shop Assistant* tolerantly printed my explanation. Not reliance on compulsion, I said, but *no force* is the workers' remedy.

At this time British democracy was stirred by a prolonged labour dispute in the quarries of North Wales. One private owner seemed to stand as sole barrier between the thousands of men and the slate by which they lived. In a letter printed by *The Clarion* I applied the Tolstoyan analysis: monopoly upheld by state force; force resting on our own faith in coercion. Like most workers, I was still commercially untaught. The elements of organising skill, of means to maintain men while unremuneratively clearing the way to the deep-down, marketable slate, and of reaching over Britain and the Continent to the required customers, I omitted. Neither did I ask whether, in the absence of the state's unchallenged circumscribing of internal quarrels, private people would remain unarmed.

Like the Marxian analysis which it inverts, that of Christian Anarchism narrows down to something only half-true, and therefore dangerously simpler than the truths of experience. Four or five years at the observation post I was soon to occupy inside co-operative

wholesale business would prove enough to wear me from this weaker side of a Tolstoyanism that Tolstoy himself could correct and surpass. Not again would I deny the virtues and necessity of organised society because of an admixture of penalising force. But the Christianity—as I hope—remained. Never would any church, social order, or otherwise just national claim lead me to submit in my soul to the maddening hatreds, the destructive furies, the reckless plunges into poverty, famine and pestilence, the persecutions and straight-jacket compulsions, and all the devilries that I was to see leading to and arising from wars

The correctives to Tolstoyanism, Aylmer Maude would say, are always to be found in Tolstoy himself. The essentially balanced thinker in him returned from the anarchism to which his logic led. This Christian Tolstoy desired only that men should reject the machinery of mutual destruction but use for earthly happiness whatever they could direct to mutual good. It was the foresight of war and revolution, which he had, that tortured him until he cried out for us to sacrifice every material property, and every loyalty to external authority, rather than go down with millions to the coming hell. Trust in the superior value of whatever incorporated ourselves, defeated his appeal; and collective self-righteousness still stands unrepentant amidst the ruin it makes. But an awakening, and a profound turning about to the spirit of Tolstoy surely are near!

Chapter IX

DEATH COMES IN

I

DEATH is no stranger; yet my generation successfully could hide him away. Until I was twenty-six I knew him only indirectly, and except for those years in a mining village I would have known less. Thus at a third of the way through life I had seen no one dead or dying. Shipwrecks, railway collisions and industrial accidents still intruded; otherwise the world I lived in had subdued and civilised death into a private visitor, a casual debt-collector, discreet and inconspicuous.

Progress has changed all that. War has made death familiar even to little children. But the world now so accustomed to death

is also so much more clever. We can fly, travel under sea, hear across the world, change wood into silk, inject hormones, plan for a world of nations. Can we not answer death?

There is a book of 1941, *The Uniqueness of Man*, by the biologist, Dr. Julian Huxley. With his knowledge of science behind him, this grandson of the great scientific Huxley of my youth, tells me in this book that "so far as our knowledge goes, human mind and personality are unique and constitute the highest product yet achieved by the universe." This approval of the producer by the product does not imply, I gather, that the former meant to achieve anything. Man remains the only planner. However, the achievement is here; and now, "The sole source of values which we know in the universe is the commerce between mind and matter that we call human life." Undesignedly, in any theistic sense, man yet "represents the culmination of that process of organic evolution which has been proceeding on this planet for over a thousand million years." Huxley makes evolution seem to be going on before one's eyes; but to what is it going on and how? To the great deal that is left, I am told, when God and immortality are "repudiated." In future it will not proceed blindly. Man will take charge. Using a value now recognised in religion, we shall master our psychological environment, and thereby create the inner and outer harmony of the coming, humanly social world. So Dr. Huxley proudly concludes, "My final belief is in life."

You would not think that we are still to be yes-men to death! For, with immortality repudiated, it is death who is left in final possession of each of us and therefore in possession of all. A flock of sheep, it is said, will continue quietly feeding on a mountain side though this or that dying member of the flock lies fallen over a cliff. But it is in human nature sometimes to be more deeply concerned for the one than the many; and when the one man or the one woman means so much, will all the millions of years of evolution, and all the glorious future unrolling for satisfactory social units, provide any answer at all to the dark interrogator, death?

Lacking such food for the heart, forty years ago the newly-bereaved would be missing from Labour Church audiences week after week; and it does not appear that the advance of science since then and the new scientific faith "in life" have anything more to offer now, to those for whom love has found a real uniqueness in some dead wife, husband or child.

Is it unfair to reason from the painful, the deeply distressing

cases? Acute or chronic, severe or mild, disease is always disease; and the fact of no great engagement of emotion cannot make the idea of annihilation any less a misfit in the instinctive mind. I think of men personally known to me, men who have died during recent years. Their business was not with the feelings. They were maturely-active, executive men, uttering their lives in our common prose. But at fifty, sixty, seventy, each contained some rare and needed treasure, a wisdom from experience, a patience from labour and suffering, a mellowed joyousness. They were not figures of sand to be covered by a tide of oblivion, nor simply aggregations of cells. Over and above the body, each was a person, a being with characteristics, and unique in the sense of each leaving a gap never precisely to be filled. Can I empty these memories from me, make them as if they had not been? If I could I should not only deny their lives: I should cheapen life and myself. I should put myself with the heedless sheep. But none of us can reduce himself to a sheep.

Science must correct our notions of phenomena, of sunrise and sunset, of colour, of bacteria and so on; for in a thousand departments the scientific method must rule. But there is that neglected element, which must now be brought into the main account. Our direct awareness is valid in itself, and is to be served and not made to submit. Who has not felt time to be visibly flowing past, a tide running out? The stream rushes by; the channel empties; not one ripple stays. The present moment? No, it is now past; and another comes, and another. It was to-morrow; it is yesterday. Days, months, years—nothing can be held! Why have I this inward sense of living both in time and yet above and beyond it? It is no pleasurable possession. It is an inward monitor. Through this consciousness I see this image of change, and am warned of limited days and of responsibility for their use. Why am I not like the animals admired by Whitman, and untroubled?

To no question of this kind can any science give an answer. Truth must come through the understanding which is within life, and not limited to studying from outside. Like politics and the rest, objectivity can distract and lead us to forget. But we must remember the truth within, and remember, too, those not now to be counted as voters or customers or in any census, but who yet live in our lives.

When death first came near to me, forty years ago, and then came again and again, how fortunate I was to have received so much as this!

II

The bitterness of death is in that hour when a man feels himself taken while everywhere around him others are so assured of days, years and familiar things. In one who would not be thus singly torn from the world, this was the affliction which I saw.

And he whom I saw, the dying man, was, as he had thought, still comfortably far from seventy. He was a man who had lived energetically, quick with ideas and inventive talents. Bright minds in the family before him had allowed their promise to be destroyed by the tipping with which, light-heartedly, they had celebrated interim successes. Their descendant felt himself warned, and was temperate. With teetotal ardour he studied, worked and saw to it that self-help should miss no chance. In the eighteen-sixties, when secularism was new, he became a secularist. Thereafter he believed solely in "the laws of nature, as shown by science and promulgated by our highest intellects." To the interpreters of these laws he would trust, rather than to "mere writers of poetry and prose," clever though the latter might be.

In the eighteen-sixties, in the provinces, the best men were consciously moral; that is to say, industrious, enterprising, and active in making money, building up a home, rising in society, and contributing to "the greatness of England's majesty." To achieve all this, the young man described had to become his own best friend. After practising photography and engraving, he articulated himself to an architect and surveyor, and kept himself, and reached certificated, professional rank. In the town of his adoption, at last he led his profession. And previous domestic misfortunes he retrieved when he met, corresponded with, and married one of equal energy, pride and will.

Each time he removed it was to a better house.

At home and with his clients secularism was unpopular. The architect turned to freemasonry. Here was something to believe in, something of lofty and ancient meaning, yet quite solid in its symbols and social virtues! Since a professional man cannot advertise, he must find other ways of becoming known. Freemasonry was chosen, and then supplemented by more public activities. As "more radical than the Radicals," the architect stood for his Town Council. But the masses at the workaday end of the borough disliked his party ticket, and left him a few votes down. And when younger men are coming up, and business already is bad through a mining dispute, and brickworks are stopped for fuel, and mortgaged houses are standing empty, defeat becomes relegation.

In the nineteenth century the laws of nature, as shown by science, excluded chance. Apparently erratic happenings could be investigated and their order understood. Sporting wagers could be systematised, so that where one man ignorantly betted, another would act by rule. The architect had devised such ways of winning at race meetings and (he said) he had won. Perhaps the betting did no great harm to his standing in the town. After all, the Prince of Wales attended the local races, and went openly, cheered by the townspeople on his way. But horse-racing offers chance only in a crude form. Mathematically, roulette is altogether better. In England, of course, people are prejudiced. There was an all-important client who would not even tolerate a pack of cards in his house. To him the mere name would be hateful. But lucky investments in land values he would tolerate, and enjoy. So at bottom he was like the others; for what is life but a bet? You stake your future and your happiness, and if you go to work scientifically you win. So enterprise could not pay attention to prejudice, particularly in an emergency demanding additional ways of "benefiting my fellow-men—that is, my children."

At the same hotel after a race meeting, brother masons of this mind talked together. One knew; and the others were impressed. Two of the company met again, and decided on a partnership. Certain Belgian spas at that time were as good as Monte Carlo, and nearer and cheaper. Even so, the *Cercle privé des Etrangers* which the partners joined was not low-grade. One member was a French viscount, another a Polish countess, a third gave his address as the House of Commons, a fourth had been a Netherlands colonial judge—it was most enjoyable! But the partners did not forget they were operating, and not playing. Everything was businesslike; the fixed investments of capital, the division of labour, the long-tested plan for a "steady and satisfactory income." It was a pity that the distractions of the table caused one partner to confuse the calculations, and that the losses should have led English brother-masons in a foreign land to avoid each other during the rest of their stay. However, left to himself, the inventor gained "£12 by two hours' work." Yes, it was "better than stopping at home."

The date of the partnership was 1893. In 1896 the now almost ex-architect remained "confident that the end will be glorious." But after three years "operating" neither the system, nor an exploitation of more reputable inventions, nor excursions into trade with Belgium, nor a fresh start in the old profession, had prevented a break-up of his home. With her strong will, her industry, and her pride for

herself and her children, the wife created her own way and means of living. It was plain, of course, that the net losses came "not from any failure of my plans." These were even improved; and tested in leisure, and quiet they continued triumphantly to convert the mathematical pull of "the bank" into profit for the systematiser's inevitably lesser number of wins. But leisure and quiet did not extend to the "tables"; moreover the system admitted occasions when the player must

. . . . put it to the test
To gain or lose it all.

In other spheres, faith in God and your own conscience will carry you through. But at roulette, when you know your household to be against you, and remember that from neighbours and creditors at home you will get no pity, it is easy to be timid and miss just that spin of the wheel which would be so redeeming in a test at home. Then, becoming more deeply aware of what has been lost, and lost from resources so limited, in a moment of panic you may disastrously abandon system and judgment together.

Enjoyed when your pocket is full, Ostend as it was in those summers, with its magnificent Kursaal, its profusion of stylish, charming dresses, its first-rate orchestras and bands, its innumerable couples dancing in the water—"Oh, it is a glorious place!" But London in late autumn, ten years after, with your property gone, your home no longer yours, your too-revealing applications for work ignored, your boots porous, your midday meal a few prunes or cheap biscuits, and a terrible illness creeping into your bowels—London is not glorious. You do not pray; but you want an end to pain and misery, even at the price of death.

But there are hospitals and operations, and life is prolonged. So are pain and weakness, when the doctors can do nothing more. Still, when you are not yet seventy, are in some degree eased, and seem to gain strength, after all you do not want to die. You commence to believe that you may "live for years." So you find a sort of haven as a lodger, where your condition can drive none away. But the disease is relentless.

Through a kindly house surgeon the discharge from the hospital is countermanded. You go back to the dignity of a well-ordered ward; but as a life to be nursed in pity, for there is no hope for you on earth, and of any beyond you know nothing.

There, wanted or not, death comes. It comes to eyes not resting in rationalist contemplation of easeful, eternal slumber. It darkens in eyes utterly despondent. Despair is in those eyes, and doom.

These things happened forty years ago; but that darkness of despair I have not forgotten and could not forget.

III

At the beginning of the century, socialist Sunday Schools were supposed to be places in which innocents were taught to hate. The darned and patched but not ragged school maintained in a room over a stable by the Manchester Labour Church, heard nothing about class war. Our hymns echoed natural religion; our talks were of natural wonders, fellowship, and good men's lives. Once a year we packed the school into a horse-drawn lorry for a picnic in a distant city park; and at Christmastime we feasted in the schoolroom and romped. When the "church" dissolved and the school had to end, the awakened affection would not die. With one obstinate teacher, children gathered together to walk in the streets or sit in the nearest public garden.

From the Tolstoy Society there came a new helper, Bertha Pulman, a girl of twenty. A lively, independent spirit lived in her brown eyes and pleasant figure; but it was a spirit now quietened by thought. She was simply dressed. To a girl friend she had written:

"I shall never be happy in the orthodox frills and furbelows of millinery. Now, more than ever, I feel that I have no right to dress myself up or ornament myself even the slightest, while there is so much poverty and need. I have given up even the School of Art, which was rather a wrench, as you may guess, and believe I have decided that the need of the world, and particularly of the women in it, is for agitators to stir the people up to a knowledge of the injustice, the cruelty and the folly of things as they are. I feel . . . that what is wanted is the elimination from the life of each individual of all the things that are selfish and harmful to others. That we must not have for ourselves anything that is not accessible to all men and women, and, above all, children. It is Tolstoy who has taught me these things . . . Well, you see, I am wasting your time with explanations of my philosophy, which is likely to cause you worry and to take your thoughts from dressmaking and millinery."

At the Tolstoyan meetings the quiet new-comer had attended to listen. Except from the children she received at first little more notice in the school. But the children felt her quality. "The first Sunday she came," they wrote to her parents later, "she put her arms around us and made friends. She asked us to come to her house, and she was so kind. She played with us and clapped us for singing

and reciting, and we had such a nice tea." Even we people with a message were too few at the school to be permanently blind; and soon the letter-writer and I walked homeward in company, for our ways stretched together. Her parents were secularists, and we talked of the last debate.

"I cannot think that Christianity is all untrue," she said, "or how am I to explain why Christian churches are often so beautiful?" "The outside," she added, "for I have never been inside a church."

There came to me a vague, rich, composite picture drawn from Lincoln, which through common co-operative interests both of us had visited, Coventry, and a dozen church interiors, the inner quality of the Manchester cathedral included.

"What fine, foreign lands you have waiting for you!" almost enviously I cried.

With a hesitating promise to continue our talk at my home, my companion left me under the low, dun, Manchester, December sky; and along the rest of my way I strode cheerfully. The children's new friend was also a writer, and I carried with me manuscripts which I had begged to read. What happiness there was in reading and finding in them both sincerity and art! Eagerly I began to look toward the soon-coming date of the promised visit.

Out, out, brief candle! There was an accident. A patent, Turkish-bath-at-home contrivance took fire. The burns were terrible; but seeing and feeling her mother's anguish the sufferer would have pretended they were slight. "I'm all right," she cried out, and then collapsed. At the hospital, unconscious, her brain unwound jumbled records of meetings, rambles, field talks, until the fever conquered, and the young, scorched body lay dead.

The day of the funeral, within the first week of the dead girl's lost new year, was a mild day of primrose light. Trees stood motionless in the quiet glory flowing through their fine twigs to colour all the moist, fresh grass. The burial service was secularist. I listened, but what my spirit heard was the loveliness of the day crying out against the dead words. Once more, this faith in extinction was inhuman. Better to believe even against reason! But there was more reason in belief. Reason lived in the waiting buds of the January trees, in the robin so deliberately singing, in the few, sailing clouds coming lustrous from the south and west, and in the blue depths between. Or, if not in these, it lived in the assuredness that such facts could awaken in the heart. From the cemetery I returned heavy with the loss of a gladness so suddenly gone out, but not in the blackness of an extinguished sun.

A story by the dead writer was published on that day, a story describing for children the emigration of a poor family from Manchester, and a child's separation from a loved, illiterate old man. "It was no use Mollie writing to him, because he could neither have read her letters nor have answered them." So the lonely old fellow turned to feeding the birds Mollie had cared for, "though they were only cheeky little town sparrows."

I, too, looked for no messages; but on the night of the burial I took up a Bible and read, "I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" for "God is not the God of the dead but of the living." Yes, of the living! To the natural, human world we die: this reality no pretence can alter. But in the worst, the utmost mortality, what evidence is there of death in relation to that life and those modes of being which are touched or glimpsed here but are in themselves other? None, none, none! said everything that was luminous within me. It was more than a thought. For once I felt and saw. Alone in my bedroom, joy sent me to my knees. When I rose I could only read again the fresh, new words: *I am . . . God is not the God of the dead but of the living.*

Death is not no-death. Conversation cannot proceed as if none has gone out, and no door stays shut. But I believed. Henceforward, whatever my dread of being thrust out of the comfort of bodily health into agony and mortal weakness, my belief would be in life as, to the living person, it is.

On Sunday afternoons, walking that same way to and from the school, under a sky even in Manchester quickening now and then for spring, I continued to meditate not only on a lonely awakening of the flowering earth but, beyond this, on what was newly sure. For so definite a personality could not arise wholly from a bodily structure that was ever changing, nor from the pattern, the complex, subtle, persistent organisation. Pattern and structure came from that which organised, that imponderable. And that was the spirit itself, and not conditions which can fatally alter, but (since they cannot create) cannot destroy. Therein was the living secret, the soul which was "I." So, in memorial verses I wrote:

Think, can the frost that kills
The bud, one glory make?
Think, can the change that chills
The blood, one spirit wake?
Ah, no! not by their whim
Are we made or destroyed:

Life is the gift of him
In whom it is enjoyed;
And he is love, and sure;
Who roots in him dies not;
O soul unmarred, O life unscarred,
If you with us endure
Much less has God forgot!

An unflattering truth also was forced upon me. This funeral of a social worker not yet twenty-one, had been extraordinarily attended. Neither the circumstances nor the public position offered a sufficient explanation. She who had died had always chosen a beginner's part. Others at the University Settlement, on grand occasions, had sunned themselves beside the best-known persons present. She had gone out of sight to wash up the pots. Her public speaking had not begun, and hardly her public writing. Why, then, these numbers and their unaffected sympathy? It could only be that the dead girl had accomplished what Newman had described as "God's noiseless work." She had made herself loved. A dozen, twenty, thirty people testified to it. Affection less taught and less experienced even than my talking and writing, in a less time had done more and gone deeper.

Here was a new cause for reflection, and a new way of measurement. A person had been in action; and the difference from other persons in efficiency for good, made nonsense of the simple, pantheistic picture of the souls of men as dewdrops sliding to an impersonal sea. Personality, finally, was not a container. It was the essential fact. And the differences—from unlovable to lovable, and from loving to greatness in love—provided a scale. If this secularist girl could touch so deeply, what could not be done by the commanders of hearts?

Christ had seemed near, and much too near. Now he rose, and I sank, and ranks on shining ranks stretched between. Now, at best, I could only cry: Make me, O God, the lowest soul in heaven!

IV

Without warning, cat-like, and less seen, death came through the door, once, twice, and again. His third intervention was between the mother and the son.

The two had left the solid row of bay-windowed houses where the mother had let her rooms and had lived in a kitchen enlivened only by including in its view of back walls one small tree. The tree had changed as the blank, dark walls did not; and it had been a

companion amidst changes: the baby returning as a man, the never-imagined, cruel conflict with a child unnaturally grown hard, the stages of suffering to gain what had been dreamed of as won. The deeper differences, at last, were gone. But there were difficulties, still.

Like many Manchester residents, the mother had no pride in the place where she lived. If you had to stay in such a town, this suburb was as good as any other, and more convenient. The young man was just as unable to make a real change; yet he would move. To him the district was spiritually as well as physically flat. "Debtor's Retreat" it had been named, which, said the son, was unfair to any but the meanest debtors. So he dragged the mother to higher ground, working class, but not all covered, as yet, by lines of houses. A farm or two remained, and a sort of walk along a canal, and, a mile away, even a valley between mills, with the last of a bluebell wood, and a distant view of higher hills. But the house to which they went, although without bay windows, was in a street just as straight, still more bare, and, in calling itself an avenue, still more pretentious.

The mother's puzzling, complicated illness persisted. Often she felt fairly well. There is nothing wrong, really, she would then tell herself. But sometimes there was no ease even in lying on the sofa. Pain added weariness to the long-stretching evenings, endless until the son came home to this further-out district, after being away since morning, and now later home, after meetings, than ever. But she must not let him see that.

And she would rise from the sofa with a greeting and smile; although, half-consciously, the son saw and noted the truth.

However, the mother neither asked nor hinted that he should spend his evenings, or an occasional evening, at home. She believed, now, that her son was doing good; and that, as she more strongly believed, is what we live for. He had answered Blatchford's atheism in the "Clarion"; and his article had reappeared in a book, along with others by professors and by doctors of divinity who were evidently Christians and good men. He put things oddly, sometimes, but in a way that was real. No doubt she and others had been too old-fashioned; truth was always truth; but like men and women it needed new clothes. It would be a grand thing, and a forgiveness and a blessing, if he could live to make religion more real to men!

Certainly (she reflected) there was good in him. He was not cold in his affections, really. He was still too confident, too ignorant you might say. He wanted people to live like saints. So, of course, we

should. But more than any other good thing, heaven was not to be got cheaply. He would find that out. Again, his idea of living singly, for God, was good. But we need something more than ideas; something to give them strength. At present his devotion was a young man's ardour. When the right woman came he would marry; if he took his nature more into account it might be safer. But if he could go on, let him! She, herself, would choose that way. And she would help him in it.

If he married (she said to herself) his wife would have trying times. He was too headstrong, even in his goodness. But the hardest days would have been hers, his mother's. Although he wanted it, living in this new district was not easy. It was not as if it were necessary. Could one not serve God in any place? To side with working people was right; she, too, was a worker; for who could have toiled harder and received less? But who was any the better for her son living in this "avenue"? Folks could be decent folks, and yet not become personal friends. There were differences between people. It might be that she was not good enough to live here; but, good or bad, one had one's own tastes; and somehow the neighbours, churches and shops of this district did not fit in with her own tastes. That was not their fault. They had not asked them to come. Meanwhile, to her old friends it was a long way, especially when she was tired and exertion made her feel queer.

The son yielded. In the old suburb, after all, a working-class house, grade-one of 1900 construction, could be found. If the old district was going down, the workers were rising up. A mingling was becoming easy. But a woman can serve a new house too well. Through that four-years-past, six months' illness, nature had given a lesson which neither mother nor son now heeded. Yet some medical attention had continued. A young doctor in the working-class suburb had been a good visitor, and for the lonely resident that had been a cheerful tonic. His skill was no larger than his practice; and his drugs had done no more than the other vain prescriptions. However, he followed his patient to her new address, and at least had become alarmed by the effects of the labours after the removal, and had called in another specialist. Now the latter diagnosed correctly. But the news came four years too late.

Those long years were over, ended by a single week. On the fourth day the mother was told that recovery was impossible. She listened quietly. The removal was but a few weeks past; only when she fell ill was the house straight and in proper order for welcoming her old friends. And her age was no more than fifty-five; her son's

income was improving; after enduring the grey, rough seas, the vessel was going down at the very harbour mouth. Yet she said, "Now we are here, I would have liked to live for another twelve months; but if it is God's will I am content"

It was no resignation dictated by pain. Bodily pain, including the useless tortures of battling for extra weeks or days, was past. The composure was of the spirit. That which in the first death had been so dark and forlorn, here proved itself serene. Affection, as relations and friends came, was free to flow out in gentleness. No ecstasies; no visions, nothing abnormal. Simply—but this is the greatest thing of all—the tranquillity of love and belief and truth. Amidst the sincerities of death, beyond all doubt, faith, hope and love, these three.

From London came the dying mother's elder sister. For this special visitor the younger woman kept alive, "to have tea." In the last of ten thousand such actions and the finest, without effort as it seemed, sisterly feeling kept death from the room. Then the door was set ajar; when, as if at her own time, the conqueror turned to sleep. Gradually the breathing became sonorously mechanical. Real life was over; in the dignity of its obedience the spirit was gone. And the light of morning stilled the body.

So unconsciousness had come in on tiptoe, and at last had turned and beckoned to death.

V

"Human personality," . . . "the highest product yet achieved!" What, finally, do we mean? If each person dies for ever, how can personality live? And if the universe has come from nothingness and returns to nothingness, what is there for the human flock, the human herd?

On these questions man has been long enough on the earth to settle his mind. And primitive man did make up his mind. It is the modern brain which has gone back professedly nearer to the passivity of the grazing sheep. Serious godlessness may be better, for it can be aseptic and cleansing; yet lotions are not food; nor can men continue to live by any secularised or paganised synthetic substitute. The humblest citizen has wit enough to question death, and an inner life to grow by the answer or be paralysed and, at last, destroyed. So we cannot wait until we are dead. Life is now; and the answer must come now.

When I was very young I imagined that the whole riddle could be evaded. A perfected society would give to every member his fulness of years. Quite happily, then, each and all would fall asleep.

How ready I was to confuse rest from life with final death? How simply I missed the real contradiction, which is not between few years and many, or between starved desires and desires on earth fulfilled; but is essentially between *being* (waking or sleeping) and *not-being*.

Time itself is no fixed thing. A little can seem much, and much little. The child's day is longer than the ageing man's, and the lingering of pain very different from the flight of pleasure. The one relevant question is that of whether human lives are real or only bubbles on an eternity of nothingness? Against this pertinence, the other matters, of the bubbles bursting soon or subsiding at length, of enduring singly or holding together in clusters, are of little consequence.

Once more, the challenge is too near the heart to be put aside. In the house of man there is now no room for both agnosticism and death. If all human ploughing is but a ploughing of the sands of time, then rational life is mocked. If love on earth is awakened only to be denied that fulfilment for which it is born, then the very height of achievement is trampled down. But we need not believe it. The cosmos, ourselves and the nature of man all have come from beyond any human will. Given these wonders, why should we turn back upon them to believe in death?

We need not, and we must not. We have accepted birth and rejoiced in it. We must now accept as reasonable what the nature born in us demands; and, more than that, we must struggle to possess faith in life, and keep it.

For myself, I was already travelling this road to belief that the three deaths made so certain. No one could die and be done with. This understanding was sufficient to explain the despair I saw from the first bedside. It was no shadow of annihilation; nor any darkness of a "lost soul." I had seen only a misery of failure, a confusion and mortal depression, for which death itself must be the medicine. The trust in nature, and the ego, and the secular world had collapsed, and life was in disorder and the meaning clouded; and, not yet able to return to the Invisible, the self was utterly lonely and astray. And the same secular trust failed again, at the second death. But the failure overthrew the survivors, and not the maiden; for when her body perished the eyes of her spirit were opening, so that atheist advocacy in the Secular Hall debates had begun to make her wriggle in her seat. Of the second or third freethinking generation, she would not have stayed content except with ideas deep enough to explain and match her innate feelings. But the others had only

that rationalism which professes extinction, and in the real presence of death, how great was that darkness!

It is true that a rhythm exists. Death is not mere appearance and meaningless. Young or old, the dying are at the falling of night. There must be rest and sleep. We may fully believe, firmly and wholly, and yet be very properly tired of living, tired of the world, tired of ourselves as in this world we are and as it is making us, tired, tired of everything except what is not of this earth. Nevertheless, at his third approach death took one weary only of illness. If death were all, she would have been the most cruelly mocked. But the sunnier years that she was losing, after so many that were bleak, were outshone by the lamp within.

The serenity came from no confidence in her kind. The story of human crimes, human falsehood, human malignancy, is such that one might abhor the human shape in body and mind, and pray for the Eternal to obliterate everything. And this aspect the dying woman well knew, in its depth if not in its extent. But there are the innocent and the kind, and first amongst them the Saviour she loved, toward whom death must take her. That Jesus is fit to live for ever, and that those who love him may plead their love, and even rest in it, is the final answer of life to death.

Chapter X

CHURCH DOORS

I

"Your letter brought a rush of joy which sent me to my knees in thanks to our dear Lord. He is giving you more of himself, that you may find the spirit of humble adoration to be the peace and gladness as well as the source of a life of service."

One of the truest Christians in our little Tolstoyan band, with more faith in me than I had deserved, so answered some confessing note of mine. My correspondent was an Anglo-Catholic who had been a Unitarian. Stars and skies, and philosophies of that kind, said nothing to him. His needs were human. As a Unitarian he had worked with and lived near a back-street mission. Alone in his small house, he scrubbed his doorstep as zealously as any of his northern neighbours. Now, as an Anglican, he was in a country village, serving the church and developing a market garden.

At the time of this correspondence there were three of us, this friend older than myself and, with me, a young man of my own age, ready to look sympathetically in one case upon whatever was Catholic, and, in the case of the others, on any mode of serious living contradictory to that of the business and every-day world. Together, therefore, we set out for the modern abbey of Mount St. Bernard, on the upland of Charnwood Forest in Leicestershire, walking there as pilgrims, fifty miles in a straight line across the map.

Here was something better-ordered than the Tolstoyan colonies and therefore simpler, yet infinitely august. The guestmaster joined in friendly conversation, and other monks would not be so letter-bound as not to ask or answer a question. But these exchanges left unaffected the general, impressive replacement of argument by silence. In the darkness of the summer nights the first bell awoke us, calling the household to take up again the ceaseless round of prayer. The June sunshine visited white-robed brothers in field and house and cloister, never hurried but always occupied and purposeful; and in the gallery for visitors in the abbey church, while the monks were prostrate at the elevation of the host, I heard through the silence, as once in a Friends' meeting house, the singing of the birds. To the grey rocks and upland meadows and pastures, and to the wide vale spreading beyond the calvary, evening light came with new dignity, earth and sky being one, with nothing to mar the fine and tranquil air. At compline the abbot invoked the blessing of the fathers of the order, Benedict and Bernard, saints still alive to God; and the quiet invocation surrounded me with a sense of one great family, increasing from century to century, ever in living union with the divine Head. On the way back to the guest chamber, humbly we strangers received the sprinkling of holy water.

All protestant born, none of us three ceased to be critical. We found a lay brother whom it well suited to be shepherded and guided like a little child, and we noticed elder monks not always alive with devotional joy, but morose and dull-eyed. Our enquiries touched those of the religious who were refugees, driven by anti-clericalism from France. "We and they are rather different," the guestmaster said gently. "We think we keep more to the spirit and they to the letter." The pillars of the Order no doubt were not uniform; but the differences were all but out of sight. Undiminished in their effect, the life in the fields, the returns to the church, the spotless austerities of refectory and cubicles, the simple graves in which, uncoffined, the bodies of the monks finally lay, together formed a temple of the spirit, standing up like a cathedral. While

the Tolstoyan and socialist colonies had gone to wreck, this community (and its fellows over the world) held together and would hold. I came away like an ancient Pict stealing home after his first contact with a Roman cohort.

II

To live on, as the life of the universe goes on! Set against that endlessness, what is our own day? But to contain such a value, who is fit? I was not. My need was for schooling. Within the motherland of truth, where was the school?

Near at hand, my Nonconformist forbears would have said. Near as your conscience, church, home and work. Give your heart to God, become responsible to him, and your monastery is everywhere! And it might have been added, Listen and obey! All this I could understand and respect. Apart from the somewhat solid weight of nonconformity, indeed I could accept it all. But as a speaker at Brotherhood meetings too often I had been prayed for (precisely under that special head) to feel that improvised petitions represented dignity and our human best. As for ritual silence, it was good, yet—*Exult, O dust and ashes!* Weak would be the appeal to our souls if always we refused to include music, and especially church, processional music, joyful and triumphant!

A finicking fellow indeed! Well, what was the Church of England for, if not to be a dump for such as he?

Since the boredom of my boyhood I had paid little attention to the Anglican church. It was part of the furniture of the country, come down to us with the rest, and that was all. But from Mirfield, only thirty miles from Manchester, there came other news. Monks of the English church had welcomed Keir Hardie, and allowed a socialist meeting within their grounds. Mirfield evidently stood for an advance upon what the Community's then well-known missionary, Father Paul Bull, once described as "a scheme of salvation by resident country gentlemen."

Monastic hospitality again opened the way, and I was able to visit the House of the Resurrection, so near to where I had drudged and dreamed in the West Riding. Uphill from the dreary railway station which I knew, I found the house neither retreated into the country nor thrust into solid streets. The outlook passed over the subdued valley of rail and road, canal, dark river and mills, to be level with the older Yorkshire of fields and woods still green on the hillside opposite. With a church to build and a quarry for the job, here, too, were brothers working with their hands; and in the

converted drawing room of what had been the home of some prosperous manufacturer, here, too, daily the offices were recited. And here I was not limited to looking on from a guest house. Once more befriended beyond any deserts, from the lobby and its table of journals for waiting visitors, and the library and its shelves for the books "that Christians dare not read," I went on to house with the monks, and to return again and again.

For me, Mirfield became another name for Dr.—afterwards Bishop—Frere. How am I to speak of a man who was so with me and yet so above me! Here was a classical scholar, an historian, a traveller able to discuss the technique of music heard only in the Far East, and a spiritual leader and head in perhaps the most active Anglican Order of the time. More than this, here was saintliness. Rule and judgment I could associate with the firm mind and equable temper of the Superior of the Community of the Resurrection, but never anything mean, vain or gross. The gift of companionship then, and for years afterwards, bestowed on an all-round junior could only illuminate the different heights of character.

But I was not asked to surrender the loyalty of thought, even to holiness. As Aylmer Maude and I had walked and talked, so, when the head of the Community could leave the house behind, and pass the quarry, and reach the hillside beyond, I now could talk with the tall figure in the cassock, so patient with one who must have seemed a casual, self-recommended visitor ready to argue but to do nothing else.

Dr. Frere had to answer obvious questions about the Creeds, and especially about the doubtful statements and obsolete forms of statement imposed on churchmen through the second paragraph of the Apostles' Creed. In Church organisation and worship (he replied) admittedly the old was mingled with the new in a way that was a drawback as well as a strength. But this was the normal state in any great continuing organisation; and the Church was both old in history and a large, complex and still growing body. For an individual it was not a question of whether the Church as a society, or its creeds as collective statements, precisely fitted and expressed one's individuality in its particular day and place. Instead, the individual should ask whether he was sufficiently in harmony with the whole to throw in his lot, and work in fellowship for God and man. Outside Church organisation — and Nonconformity was a half-conscious Churchmanship—there was holiness also, for God's ways were large. But, in general, organised methods were the effective methods; and so Christ had founded the Church to be his

main human implement, and had endowed it with special means of intercourse with him. To live socially was a human need, and to receive spiritual help and power was a need. God knew our needs and provided for them. If a man believed *that*, he would thankfully and lovingly accept the provision; indeed, he would not be able to live without it.

One could sympathise with those outside the Church (Dr. Frere continued) who were repelled by archaic terms, or in doubt upon points of historic belief like the Virgin birth—although the balance of evidence supported that miracle—but the issue was not between people who differed on points like these. It was between Christian faith on one side, and materialism, cynical disbelief and anti-Christian doctrines on the other. As in all human conflicts, a decision had to be made, either to stand isolated or join that body with which one felt a kinship of spirit.

I was not including myself, I hope, with the once-popular *Robert Elsmere* school described in its time as using strong doubts to balance weak heads; but "atheism or Rome!" (transposed to "Rome or atheism!") was an old cry; and I had to ask whether the merging of private in corporate belief should not be taken all the way?

Did I not agree (I was asked in return) that the final authority in a society ought to reside in the whole body and not be centralised in one absolute individual? As the will of God was to be known by the whole man, responding through intuition, reason, will and all his nature, so the divine authority was most certain where the Church was agreed in all its branches. It was the Church as a whole—East and West, Roman and Anglican—which was God's covenanted vehicle of help, it was not reasonable to think of any one part as possessing a monopoly. The Anglican was the branch anciently founded in our own country, and inheriting from the common, undivided body its orders, sacraments and creeds: this was the Church in mediæval England and is the Church in England still. It could not quarrel with Rome, for it shared with Rome the faith embodied in the creeds; but within this common faith it was free to make its own contribution to Christianity, which was in its reconciliation of authority and liberty, of episcopacy and congregational freedom, and in its avoidance of despotic or anarchic extremes. It did not claim to be perfect or always right; but, subject to the main Catholic faith, its members could believe in its particular outlook and methods, which time and the course of events seemed more and more to justify.

I listened; and except for the confidence of a young man in his own particular outlook, and a special pride of freedom, I could have envied those who had grown within the Church. But I was outside, and to have to accept the archaic deliberately and with an adult mind, seemed like being required to dress in doublet and hose. Looking for clothes and needing them, a man still might want nothing too odd. Or, naked to the bone, starving and ashamed, he might accept with a passion of need and abasement never suggested to me by the reasonableness of Mirfield. Absolute surrender, outward, visible, complete, was surrender to Rome.

III

During my eighteen months' work as a clerk at Balloon Street I had become acquainted with an earnest Catholic of Irish descent, a simple, yet shrewd and scholarly man. He visited me and lent me books, amongst them a touching short life of the beatified French missionary and martyr in Tong-king, Théophane Venard. It was evident that pupils of the Roman school could be examined by sacrifice and suffering to the point of torture, and pass with honour. In the nineteenth century, Venard clearly was in line with the early martyrs; whereas I was less sure about even the best Anglicans, the fine photographs I had seen at Mirfield of native, African, daughter churches notwithstanding. And other and still greater Christian names widened the horizon: John of God; Catharine of Siena; Francis Xavier; Vincent de Paul; Peter Claver. None came from Eastern Europe; yet beyond the limits of a single country I saw the many children of a church more than national. In the Anglican calendar there are two hundred and fifty empty dates, and of those names which are entered in it, I, for one, had heard in church almost nothing. How many inanimate sermons as many glimpses of historic, heroic living might have quickened! The purged and unfed calendar symbolised, it seemed, a want of interest in the life of man; while it was the despotic Church of Rome which appeared by contrast alive to human struggles the world over.

The *Catholic Dictionary*, the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* and the pamphlets of the Catholic Truth Society became familiar. My Catholic friend, living for his religion, more and more was invited to talk, and he would have been happy indeed to have heard from me in return the full word of acceptance. As it was he had to lament that I went "a long way forward with one leg, but a long way back with the other." There were deterrents. Historical

arguments concerning the validity of orders were endless and became tedious, and the Elizabethan scene not only cruel but arid. Reading inclined one to neither party but against both. Authorised or unauthorised, Christian was as Christian did. There was a Franciscan monastery near to where I lived. The East Manchester settlement in what was at that time the district of the poorest-paid labourers of the city, carried on the great, fraternal tradition. I could honour that. But these exotic robes! They had lost their original meaning. Their original spirit called for translation into the nearest outfitter's cheapest stock. Then, perhaps, the preacher would not have been so separated from his simple and mentally-defenceless congregation as to hold these labouring men and women over the flames of hell. It was, no doubt, an old discovery that correct orders could not be relied upon for lovable results, but it was in my own time that results could be so freely checked, and the priesthood of corrupt popes, worldly cardinals, and heresy-hunting bishops set beside the calling of a Wesley, a Booth, a Woolman, a Moffat, a Johann Kapf, a Mary Slessor.

All these things drew me back not from reverencing the mother church of all Christendom, but from feeling it a duty to cancel in my own small person the liberty of the Reformation. So where a Catholic church stood on a main road of Vanity Fair with its side door ajar as if to say *come*, and where women in shawls came, and men in caps, and others more finely dressed, I felt the dark, quiet, open portal to be in contrast with a garish road as once I had felt the moonlight to be; yet I did not enter. Or my spirit went in alone, to stand retired; for I wanted to escape inwardly from current life and the ugly world. I would read à Kempis and John Tauler, and steal into open churches at odd hours, and fence myself about with imagined altars and the sign of the cross, and try to build a chapel of the soul. But in a Manchester narrow street on a grey and cold morning, there broke into my thoughts that common sight (before the dole) of a family on tramp—the father in a close-buttoned jacket with a scarf tight about his thin neck, the undersized mother hugging a living bundle inside her faded, Lancashire shawl, and the bundle's brother trudging lifelessly. The family passed by, and then I turned to look back, and was aroused. Away went Archbishop Parker and Bishop Barlow: here was to-day; and, by the wayside, stripped and wounded, our own kind! It is true that where the monastery or the parson or the Wesleyan Mission or the Salvation Army would have done something for that struggling family, I, detached, did nothing. But that forlorn and bitter parody did something for me.

I was not becoming one of those to whom the Roman or Anglo-Catholic forms are second nature, and no distraction. I was slipping instead into a religion to be put on, like vestments over trousers. Too many of the pious were thus covering up the marks of sin on our human body. That twentieth-century, starved family brought back the realities. Whatever the plunderings of the Reformation and its disruption and anarchy, or whatever the enlargements of mind and deliverances from child-like dependence, it was all far behind. I was in a living day, and religion must be as always when alive—an emerging force in the present conflict of good and evil, of hope and despair, valuing the good, and turning toward it all our inner strength. The Church of the cathedrals I could love. I could believe that, born into it, Roman or Anglican, I could **have found my freedom** within it. I could be sure that if the alternative were that of submitting to either one of the godless, political religions of this later day, I would turn unhesitatingly to Rome. During nearly forty years since those advances, no Catholic has heard from me a single word against his faith. It was enough that for the same ends and (as I hoped) within the same spirit, I could follow methods more naturally arising from my free enquiries, from my Quaker and Free Church as well as my Catholic contacts, and from my proletarian experience.

Harnack's *What is Christianity?* and Auguste Sabatier's *The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit* assisted my disentanglements, yet not so as to set form against form. Protestantism was already dead. The search was for a Catholicism at once more free and more innately authoritative, a Catholicism of experience. For me, especially, there led toward it not Pascal the anti-Jesuit (though justified by a Richelieu) but the wholly Christian Pascal, writing on reason, on the greatness and littleness of man, on the sublimity of holiness and the uniqueness of love. And toward it, St. Augustine's discontent with the world led, and his perception of our animal nature from infancy; and this way, also, the rival clusters of Catholic and Puritan poets combined to lead. A Unitarian commended to me a sermon in which Newman the Anglican had spoken; and Newman the Catholic had published, words addressed to "all those who acknowledge the voice of God speaking within them and urging them heavenward." Although in oneself one might be more aware of the animal voice, Newman and his Quaker-like words together seemed to bridge the whole space of Catholic aspiration. Far from blessedness the complete man

might be; yet the hope was in this road, and in freeing the mind at least to go far along it.

Meanwhile, and not only from Dr. Frere. I had gained a deep respect for the sacraments. Indisputably, experience spoke. The nourishment in the Eucharist for heart, mind and will was real. To him that possessed, more was given. This was the "covenanted" grace. But none the less valid was the primary and larger contract inherent in our very creation and dependence. *Seek ye me and ye shall live.* The seeking is adventure and risk; and what is one man's spiritual meat is not another's; but that which the search finds and proves for the seeker is his own. This does not mean anarchy. As there are groups for blood transfusion, so there are spiritual groups. The variations are within discoverable laws and conditions; for there is a larger order and discipline, since humanity lives within one body of implicit, spiritual law which is, properly, divine.

To seek, to feel after, to find, was enjoined by the great saint on Mars' Hill; yet, with all my agreement, I did not get encouragement at Mirfield for this way of approach. Religion still came down authoritatively from God to man. Logically, of course, everything descends. We are creatures and dependants. As children we are taught; as adults we learn; little is of ourselves. Nevertheless the man's way of learning is not the child's; and in our day we have to begin again with man. For this generation, the story of Jesus has become a fairy tale, and God is a reality lost. The accepted facts to-day are of man and his needs—these near, and God far. So it is in ourselves and our fellows, amidst the miseries dragging achievements down, and within the urgent, dramatic conflict of high instincts and mortal failure, that we must re-establish divine reality.

I think of the Christian majesty still remaining in England and Europe. From the riches of Exeter and St. David's in its sea-bordered, moorland dell to Durham so massive and proud, I think of thirty Anglican cathedrals, and then of more than a hundred noble, parish churches seen since the Coventry spire first caught my gaze. I think of what the nearer countries of Europe have shown me, in Rouen, in Vienna, in Cologne, Palma, Venice. I recall the simplicities of Norway, and the grandeur of St. Paul's in Rome, and of St. Peter's, either seen from Tivoli, with its dome floating on a far, sunset sky, or surveyed from the floor, with its interior marble and gold, and its throngs and processions, all taken up into airy freshness by the space and light within. I remember that these triumphs are but evidences of a faith that mothered nations—governing kings,

leading universities, chastening power, and inspiring and training innumerable workers to loving skill.

All this is past; and in England the open, hospitable, lovely churches remain on working days as empty as museums. Their real hope is not in mere revival. The future that will direct the human flow into them and around them and through them belongs to a new Christian realism. It belongs to a religion coming not as from parents to little children, from above, but out of our manhood, under the skies.

V

"Why do you not take Orders?" The question was put to me by a young priest at Mirfield. He added, "A man like you, with social and economic knowledge, would have scope in the Church."

We have left undone . . . this confession comes before and is of deeper meaning than the admission of things wrongly done.

But was the failure wholly on the part of the possible candidate, and of others who would have been possible? For those who felt no strong call to leadership in devotions there should have been different services, parochial and diocesan activities, open to any qualified person ready to spend himself and take simple maintenance in return. The fact of a non-religious educational system having taken over general instruction, does not excuse an intellectually do-nothing church. Millions of young people know little or nothing of the great Christian lives. Masses of simple parishioners have not the elements of mental assent; and they wonder why God is silent, and why no miracles now restrain the cruel and confute the godless, and why God permits war. The evolution of Catholic philosophy amidst all the heresies, remains for the people a buried story. They have the translated Bible, but, from the Church, no translations into intelligent understanding. In a world of evil the meaning of the love of God, and, still more, the meaning of our own lives, waits for entry into the general mind: while people of good faith conclude that the Church, Catholic or Anglo-Catholic, has nothing better to say than can be got from the nearest non-miraculous and possibly agnostice source. The nature of faith healing, and the values of psychic phenomena call for organised Christian co-operation with existing research; while parishes have yet to become co-ordinating centres of enquiry into social facts. Above all, against teachings of class warfare, race idolatry, colour bars, and ideas of lesser breeds, and against every propaganda of superiority, hatred and contempt, there is the oneness of mankind to be established afresh, in minds as well as in hearts. The Church has its buildings and officers, and if her

priests are overburdened she could add national and diocesan organisers, devoted, yet paid, for voluntary local effort is ever insufficient. And besides going out of her way to gain full Christian co-operation, she could turn to the modern resources of press and films, of classes and debates; and she could follow our Lord into the open air. It is not the fault of laymen alone that the mind of the people lies open to the religions or pseudo-religions of the world, because, not entering in, true religion has left so much undone.

When I did not join the Church, the same friend who had knelt for joy of me wrote impatiently. "It is, I believe, the devil that deceives you into standing outside, so that you may waste your life ploughing the sands."

Truly it was sterility that I continued to plough—in the declining Labour Church; in the fading promise of other and similar democratic attempts; and in that "Guild of the Spirit" which re-embodied the Manchester Tolstoy Society, and was described in a Manchester daily as a promulgation of a new religion from a basement café; and was as futile as the notice was meant to suggest. But however unimportant, the tiny attempts were not quite ridiculous. They stood for a few content neither to be somnolent nor to go the world's way to the Left or to the Right. But in that decade before civilisation's first attempt at suicide, the depth of the need neither we nor others plumbed. Still we could be lulled by the notion of secular progress. We had yet to see nine millions dead and new millions of dead ensuing, and revolutions followed by new tyrannies from below, and state exploitations more severe than those of private capitalism, and elementary want becoming European famine. We had not yet come to thousands of deaths on peace-time British roads, for the most part disregarded; and hardly had our nightmares included massacres from the air.

To-day the younger generation is more profoundly insecure than was I at my worst. What men do now is decisive; and present slaying, devastating, starving, deceiving, make the future, secular heaven less credible than the Christian. . . . Yet hope survives. Life is good. The generation encountering so much evil will at last see the wrong where it is, and will leave the futilities, to find that which gives life meaning and creates true heaven.

Love, hope, faith, pity, peace, joy. The freshness of morning, delight in work, unclouded parentage. The earthly zests; each which in its hour has made life wonderful. The quickening power of spiritual contacts and discoveries, the unfathomable happiness of feeling that masses with you are moving only toward things worthy

of love. Mankind cannot forget such joys and cease to be passionate to create and share them. This was the life for which I would have submitted myself to spiritual training. If, finally, within the outer courts of a decorous and all-too-English Church, I made shift without that tutelage, still I knew my poverty, and how far we are from riches. But what we have is hope. The world which has known cathedrals and saints will not willingly die. It will turn again to live with inner meaning.

Chapter XI

THERE WAS A MARRIAGE

I

"VESTIBULE of hell" is a term that has been flung at the Oldham Road in Manchester; but the abuse came from William Morris in the aesthetic age. In this section, A62 is not so distinguished. It is too plain, too humbly drab.

Iron bedsteads, mattresses, kitchen chairs, pots, pans, oilcloths, books, surrounded me on the pavement of the road on a damp November night, as I contemplated the first of many laboured ascents to a new bachelor home on the top floor of a block of municipal dwellings.

At that time it was the fashion for young men to inhabit such quarters. We believed we were attaining solidarity with the masses. Actually we were individuals seeking and enjoying novelty. These packed dwellings close to the city's centre stood almost as far from the suburbs as ducal palaces. The latter were inaccessible; tenements on top floors we could apply for and get. My tenancy was of two substantial rooms at a rent of 4/6 a week.

The Oldham Road block was superior. Another camp for insurgents was less well-built and was embedded in meaner streets. One morning, before dawn, a Manchester journalist was proceeding to his top floor in those dwellings with a goodly number of books for review under his arm. He was stopped by the police. When he gave his address, the incongruity became decisive. A place of detention was substituted, and until more respectable quarters had attested his good faith there was no release. Talk of such events endeared for us the rooms of both blocks whenever we residents met together.

Cleaned and cared for by the mother of children next door, the

new home brought other advantages. I could look down on a generous width of road, and a sea of low, slated roofs beyond, with taller buildings here and there standing up like cliff-bound islands. After rain, the sun went down gleaming on that purple sea. Deep below, as it seemed, electric tramcars hurried, and the horsed lorries of that time crawled; and on Sundays I could watch little processions of the Salvation Army, each under a fluttering flag; and with traffic noises and children's voices, piano organ tunes came up, and cornet notes and hymns. And I belonged to the city. Suburban invaders went off in their trams and trains. We stayed. From city events we took the few steps home. On Saturday nights the closing time bargains were ours; on Sundays we true citizens took over from the absentees a spaciousness in the central streets which they never knew.

In February a new light of evening rested on the far, wet roofs. In March the winds brought a sunlight as bright as the daffodils and oranges of the adjacent market; in April there was azure above the soot. But I missed the sport which the footballers extracted on Sunday mornings from the bare quadrangle; and from the bleak, stone stairs I could not pluck the joy that shone in the little children's eyes. Yet neither had I to stitch from morning to night, living with a family always in one room, nor to suffer from the rivalries and quarrels of a common washing house.

I did not live alone. Without using force to drive him away, I could not prevent the addition of a lodger. He was a socialist and a friend, but middle-aged. Instead of lighting a fire on winter mornings I found it easier to breakfast in my overcoat. My lodger disagreed, but did nothing. If I was busy with books and notes on a Sunday morning and the dinner burned, I made the best of it. My lodger would not, but again he did nothing. His sufferings brought in a sympathetic woman friend, and before long he married. An obvious end. But it was with perfect goodwill that we shook each other off.

Strangers, too, climbed up from the street. Their needs were various; and top floor residents, it seemed, acquired a certain simplicity. One visitor said he was a sailor. To ease his loneliness at sea he had paid for letters to be written and posted to him by men on shore. Touched by his story, a small party accepted the invitation to his ship, there to receive the souvenir paid for. But at the docks no vessel of the name was known.

Neither prospective lodger nor tramping beggar, another visitor came. Some years younger than myself, he was a Unitarian student in Manchester and a socialist orator. A single room along the

railed-in, outside gallery of the same top-floor was vacant, and the visitor stayed on as my neighbour. My now experienced house-keeping he drew upon for furnishing at the open-air, second-hand dealer's below. To the grubby collection he added two rich silk cushions, worked and given by a lady admirer in his native Liverpool; and to discomfort aesthetes and the prudish he hung on his walls two florid prints picturing auburn-haired girls with proudly-swelling, fleshy bosoms. Sunday mornings, when he had gone off to platform engagements, would exhibit in his one room a unique disorder of unmade camp bed, cigarette ends, books, camp washing bowl, littered chairs, razor, soap and towel, socialist papers, clothes, slab-cake remains (the Saturday night price 2½d. a pound) and the luxurious cushions. Vacantly, the half-nudes smiled down on it all.

But my floor now held a genius. The years between us gave way to the maturity of his political judgments. He had tramped the country for social knowledge; successfully he had led a strike of engineers' apprentices; he planned to be not a resident minister but a meteoric missionary. He was wise in the world; but over and above the intelligence was his infectious vitality. Whatever took his fancy in the town's motley came to life on his lips. Recitals by him, in his one room, would bring two in the morning as if it were ten at night, while the policeman on the corner outside suspiciously watched the strange tenant's late-staying guests and late-burning light. Here was the orator born. My notes for a public talk I had to compile with thought and in logical order; and—as on an occasion when I paused to consult my script and a reverend but not friendly chairman jumped up to say "hear, hear" and close the meeting—I was not always listened to. However little prepared the speech, the stoutest chairman would not have dared to cut short my neighbour. He neither noted nor memorised his points. Whatever the crowd felt or wished to feel, he would sense and put into infectious words, always with a rollicking humour—as when an attack on social shams was illustrated in those days of the cab-horse by his story of a rank of sausages on a dish. When the first sausage was taken all the others automatically moved up!

But there would have been a man of less weight if the socialist from the Oldham Road, while he denounced and amused, had lacked the power to stir and lift. Above the mouth of a demagogue there shone the eyes of a poet. These were above, and that was below. Which would prevail?

The orator attended lectures, but he preferred to sit in his chosen café and observe the people. His waitress became interested in him

and he in her. When he spoke of it to me I asked him whether he meant to let the feeling develop. A meaner expression hid his familiar, generous openness. "No," he replied, "I am not going to spoil my career." In his words and in his look I felt a false note.

Of the careerist, however, there was no other sign. The magnetic speaker continued to give himself to the people. Surrounding, praising and drawing upon this darling, organisers and supporters would hurry him from one overflow meeting to another. The too-willing victim would return to Manchester to fling himself on his bed, fully dressed, exhausted. For quick recoveries he began to depend on stimulants. But he still had vitality enough to carry him in triumph through a bye-election in the Yorkshire industrial valley nearest to Manchester. His victory was astonishing. The future Viscount Snowden stood by him, and his party possessed a good agent. The rest was done by sheer street-corner attack. The result startled the town. Front-page headlines in the London press displayed the "Amazing Principles of the New Member. No Marriage Ties!" It is not easy to think of the date as being only 1908.

Before ten thousand listeners on Tower Hill the new M.P. laid his life "upon the altar of the people." Such a dedication was needed. Amidst the specialists, from politicians to men of business, how great a want there is for those who can represent only the unspecialised common people! But Parliament is not a mass meeting. Here, the arts that did gain a power could not maintain it. Popularity brought friends and money and many drinks. The false note deepened; a flashy style was put on; engagements were not kept. A few years, and the seat was lost. There was a descent to public eclipse, and a period of private futility. At last came the sudden, final disappearance; and the tragic fall of Albert Victor Grayson was complete. There are successful leaders who also have lost the inward values, but they keep their failures concealed until they die and are forgotten; while after more than twenty years Grayson is remembered.

II

I went to the Oldham Road for a home. Except on Sundays eating could be done anywhere; and even on Sundays I could read and write in a public library. But an address, a centre, and a clean bed were indispensables. That the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head was a chief reason, perhaps, for the rich young man turning sadly away. I had no means for residential clubs, and so I fixed on my tenement.

Attached to the ex-Tolstoyan band was a bachelor of my own

age who clearly and continuously saw and felt the abyss between the houseless Son of God and all of us who, from cottage to palace, embrace the comfort of a place of our own. Temporarily to abandon status and possessions, this fellow-brooder had spent his brief annual holidays in tramping with tramps; and very early on summer mornings he had occasionally risen, not for any sunrise, but to escape the bugs. I shrank from bugs. My poverty had been clean. The urge of superior, well-washed persons forcibly to convert or suppress or banish the unclean is ancient; it divides peoples, and parcels out lands and cities, to this day. The horror of the slums is for the naturally clean, when they are powerless to prevent beetles and bugs coming in from dirty houses on either side, and lice passing from child to child. Since love is the one thing stainless, to go down into dirt to conquer it is Christian; but I was for escape.

Compromise should be my refuge. My possessions were my job, for the rest was hardly worth ten pounds; and the job I would not let go. But position did not matter. When a young policeman in the mean streets bullied a no-doubt coarse-tongued woman, and I, as another young man, remonstrated and was myself grabbed by the arm, marched to the station amidst all the onlookers, and falsely charged,* the indignity could be endured. Though May blossomed in far-off trees, while on the pavements her sunshine grew weary and died, to remain on the Oldham Road was endurable. I would continue there, and take little for myself, and work for the poor. The chairman of a suburban, Sunday afternoon class, a small manufacturer and comfortable family man, visited my tenement; and my enthusiasm for stark living was sufficient to startle him. Celibacy, too, I praised, and he became more alarmed. Religious mania could not be in doubt! The chairman excused himself and went. Not again to visit a crank would he climb all those dismal steps!

The top-floor life was to be single. Or, love being the virtue and compromise the word, a dual singleness might be admitted, like that of "The Phoenix and the Turtle":—

Leaving no posterity:
'Twas not their infirmity,
It was married chastity.

Against anything nearer to the flesh I had been warned. In the unpopular movements, married life and public life always had seemed at odds. Wives and husbands quarrelled over a civic devotion that did nothing but take the man and his money from the home; or

*"Don't trust policemen too much," said the landlady of two of them to my wife "They're that romantic!"

too obviously they shared a care-haunted insecurity; or material interests won, and another comfort-loving pair grew away from the struggle, like the "love birds" in Turgenev's *Virgin Soil*. "Never marry," said the hard-working secretary of a voluntary public organisation to me. "Women think of nothing but babies. You would find it a great handicap." "Women are domestic tyrants without knowing it," observed a more genial philosopher. "You either rebel and have storms or you do what the wife wants and anything else if there's any time left." An old socialist lecturer was bitter. "My first wife," he told me, "was a mate. But now—well, women are of two kinds, and the most sort want men only as means to their own ends." And it was a fellow trade-union worker who let fall the disillusioned words, "I feel just as happy with my legs under somebody else's table instead of my own."

In a generous and practical letter of nearly seven years earlier, H. G. Wells had told the then shop assistant that if he meant to become an author he must, first of all, give himself entirely to writing, studying, writing and writing again; and therefore he must, until successful, stay celibate. I had continued single until, now, it was not a temporary expedient. Revolt against procreation, if new generations were to live as the old, had converted mine into a celibacy of the spirit. To be abstinent was to be in protest—and to be free! Apologising to me for his contentment, an ex-Tolstoyan wrote, "Perhaps the possession of a dearly-loved and much-loving wife tends to bind one down to the things of earth." Probably I was no better than those prospering citizens who are to be found in church singing next-worldly hymns; but I repeated for myself Sidney's most dangerous verse:

Leave me, O love which reaches but to dust . . .
and added Kipling's:

Down to Gehenna or up to the Throne
He travels the fastest who travels alone.

For I was no Newman to be undisturbed by sex, from the age of twenty-eight, "without any break at all." I was a man who in boyhood never had continued for long without advances toward some little girl sweetheart; who at fifteen had awakened to a primitive bodily urge; and who at eighteen had felt sexual love in its humble, pure, aspiring simplicity. After that wholeness, there would be periods of two years at a stretch when vitality was transferred to the life of the mind, and every sexual feeling was lost in philosophic and social interests. Then neglected nature would return.

Celibacy without continence is a sham; and not being segregated like soldiers, sailors, prisoners, and other enforced sufferers from abnormal sexual hunger, I remained continent. If for an hour or two indefinite abstinence seemed an intolerable prospect, the flame was one that would die down. With the strength it can gain from habit and from shyness, virginity becomes its own protection; so that when I first came to Manchester to live, to avoid being accosted on going home late at night I would leave the pavements of a certain street and walk in the middle of the road. And as I had disbelieved the sexual boasts of flamboyant young men, so, now, I refused the current notion that no normal, unmarried man is really celibate. In later years I was able to check my opinion, and know that of half-a-dozen married men, sufficiently various to count as a sample, all had come to marriage virgin; while of two unmarried men of middle-age, one at least I knew to be continent. To the spoiled children of our civilisation whose liberty allows them to practise "sexual freedom," my group would be convention-bound and provincial; but to me such provincials are bolts and rivets in the enduring structure of civilised society.

In the *Book of Common Prayer* the second reason for marriage should (amended) become the third reason, and the third the second. A seaman, poetic but with no gift of abstinence, could tell me how a visit to a brothel utterly had failed to stir his senses, even after a voyage in sail round the Horn and far beyond; whereas a William Morris conjuring with a Tudor cottage, an orchard garden, and lamplight on an Ellen or a Clara, at any time could have shaken his singleness of mind, as it would have disturbed mine. Sex must be dainty, and, still more, must come as a friend. The feeling for a *different* friendship is that which refuses in either sex to be shut off from half the human race. I had worked with girls and women, and had found friendships strong enough to stand without any other desire or wish for it, and yet outlast life. But such chastity, quite unaware of itself, would never be married; while another acquaintanceship, aiming at no more, will by one magnetic touch of hand with hand become singular and different. And not only because of sex will those hands beckon to intimacy. More than one of my boyhood friendships commenced with the physical contacts of a fight; and to bathe with a friend would mean a greater sense of brotherhood. Between the sexes, the feeling for togetherness, too near for analysis, either must be denied heroically, as Christina Rossetti banished (and sighed for) hers, or followed from friendship

into marriage. And if the circumstances do not forbid, the union, then, will be complete.

Take or break; for the cruel thing is to let fidelities become divided and tangled. In circles where young men and women are serious about abstract love, to prevent injury there must be either a fixed control by established Christian faith or a perception of character, a delicacy of feeling and a considerate boldness such as are rarely to be found in the young. Unless we are like players who never advance in their game, it will be toward the end of life that we who were not born wise will become less unfit to enter upon its riches.

However, as if I had made a Benedick's vow when not expecting to live beyond it, I married; and, then, to leave the Oldham Road for a cottage on the edge of the nearest open country meant no wide extension of the compromise. There was a season ticket to buy, but the four rooms cost even less in rent.

III

"And you also!" A Tolstoyan group leader cheerfully reproached me for deserting "the great celibate ideal." But in his congratulatory letter he added, "I have no plans for running the universe without love between man and woman."

Christian renunciation is not that of Buddhism; and it includes no celibate ideal. Never was man or woman so single as Jesus. When the avengers of sin heard his voice, it was themselves whom they felt to be adulterous, and without facing his gaze they slunk away. In this singleness, he who could command the whole of love summoned his followers to celibacy not for refinement, tranquillity or exaltation but as to the cross. It was not a rising above the flesh and a satisfied rejection; it was a call to conscious loss, to the equivalent of mutilation. For he who was born in a shippon, and so often slept under rocks or in a fishing boat on the lake, did not choose camel hair and locusts, but loved children and homes, and the Mary who bathed his feet, and the Mary at his footstool. And Paul, though lashed by news of foul sexuality amongst his flock, wrote not loftily but gently to the married, bidding none to seek to be loosed, and even guarding his own right to marry, while finding it expedient amidst persecution to avoid married cares. And it is part of history that when Christian consideration operated to seclude women ranked as ladies from a wife's share in dangerous living, women themselves claimed the liberty and honour of the equally-adventuring mate. Whatever my conceits, there could be no Christian ideal of scorning flesh and blood.

Why, then, the hard, the inhumanly-sounding words of Christ? The answer is in this world of transition. The world, he has said, is a bridge. To-day even its foundations heave. If we would marry to settle down comfortably ever after, the celibate Christ will smite us with his condemnation lest we be more heavily chastised by the facts. We cannot be married and not married. Or, if we would unite though on a battlefield, we cannot there set up a home.

So I knew that for me marriage would be a turning point. There would be no deserted base, no following of Karl Marx in disastrously neglecting the home in fact as well as in theory. Not without distress, I would abandon all single-living within marriage, and all ambitions deriving from singleness. My platform fluency I knew to be without magnetism; my praised first book would become a publisher's annoyance, and my first play fall still-born. Having honest work, I must stay at it and earn. The lot was common . . . and it was blessed. As the married small wage-earner is, and as the parent where there is neither nurse nor servant, I would be kept close to what is most real. The wondering, trusting innocence of the baby, the running of a little child to throw itself laughing into your arms, the school boy or girl seeking your presence and knowledge, the daughter's nervous, affectionate touch as she goes with her father to her bridal, all offer a loveliness actual, yet not reached by skies, streams, hills, woods, or by the whole of these gathered into starlit night. These were realities that would not lessen the understanding of life, nor hinder the relating of it to social and political ends.

Two of our warmest-hearted Tolstoyans established their marriage simply by circulating the news to their friends. Like Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead (in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*), they had earnestly considered legal registration; but when they saw how the compliance would appear in the eyes of legally-minded acquaintances, they decided to rest their innocence solely upon the sanctions of conscience. A married couple more quietly affectionate and permanently united in house and heart, I have never met; none the less, we who also were taking marriage seriously, never doubted the consistency with conscience of a public, legal pledge. "And a room for your daughter?" asked the Lake District landlady (in the dusk of a bearded young husband. A convincing correction of such error was eased by normal marriage. Married, we take a new estate, to say nothing of one partner's new name. The change concerns more than ourselves; and if it is to be celebrated devoutly and cheerfully the appropriate atmosphere will not be that of a Government office

Church and state, therefore, were called upon to certify the union. But they had not made it. On that ground we stood with my circularising friends. And the certificate was no license. Consummation remained within the rights of private conscience. Tolstoy, whose writings had brought these twain together, would have said, go no further! In that shattering story, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, the perpetrator and victim of his jealous crime bluntly challenges a sentimental lady's idea of a married love "based on identity of ideals." Says this character, Pozdnishév, "Do people go to bed together because of the identity of their ideals?" But, like Saint Paul, Tolstoy wrote under a deep shadow upon his world. As Jerusalem in the year 55 was descending blindly into tragedy, so, in 1889, aristocratic Russia was near the abyss. The great artist was no fortune teller; yet far beyond his times he felt a doom. It was better for landowners and many others not to marry and beget and inherit, but, like Lot, to renounce and flee. Had the times been otherwise, it seems likely that Tolstoy, the artist, would not have led in dividing man against himself. None could better show body, mind and spirit miraculously joined in persons, or make us feel substance and qualities to have no meaning apart from persons. If reality were not as he drew it, there would be less difficulty in keeping loving kindness quite away from pots and pans, weekly washing, bedrooms and beds, and valeting and nursing. But love is as the great novelist has shown it—of all things the least open to analysis, and the most sympathetic with all material expressions.

Rossetti wrote of one

Whose speech Truth knows not from her thought
Nor Love her body from her soul.

However rare that perfect fusion, if a thousand poets and a million lovers are not in error, any mutual, intellectual interest may properly result in a lifetime of sleeping together.

Under the weight of prophetic warning, and seeing for ourselves something of what the world, flesh and devil have made of sex, a few of us Tolstoyans did mean to keep soul from body, with the admirable idea that love should be free from selfish entanglements. The misjudgments, hurt and pain that ensued were our condemnation. The one (costly) gain was in knowledge. Love is whole. There is no Higher to draw away its skirts from the Lower. There is one being, made to love God in all his nature, and when he fails in love, all debased. Love is so clear about this that it is burdened even by moral ideas. It is spirit itself, and by the wholeness of

feeling can settle all. Thus it is that some professed agnostics can be so spiritually-minded about sex. To such a man, artistically sensitive but without Christian faith, I spoke of the act by which two become one flesh. Under the starry night on that quiet walk, my friend stopped, looked full at me, and said from his heart, "It's a sacrament!"

"You that . . . are in love and charity . . . " The spirit within the body, reason and feeling at one, must wholly consent, or all is wrong. A middle-aged workman, a physically-robust, ordinarily sensible man with strong family interests, confessed to me the deeply-unsatisfying nature of relations that were not with the wife. "With my body I thee worship"—but in the foreign act he spoke of there could be no worship. In his book, *Angry Dust*, the novelist, Nicolai Gubsky, has written :

The rapture of possession
Surpasses all expression,
But 'tis too brief a pleasure
And life too long a pain.

But in its wholeness the ecstasy is so much more than a pleasure. It is a pledge and a dedication. Under God, which means to say, with loyalty to other right demands, there is an utter giving and utter receiving, with awe in it and wonder. It is faith and a pure flame.

"'Ma little lass! Ma little lass! Dunno let's fight. Dunno let's niver fight! Let's be together.'" D. H. Lawrence's anti-Tolstoyan idolatry of sex did not prevent him from expressing its spirit.

Of procreation, the Russian teacher has said that it is not the persons that live in the act, but the force of life that lives through them. That both parties fulfil instinct is true; and it is true also that the dynamic, the life force, is primal and is basically shared with all living nature. Plants, insects, animals, obviously live within a rhythm which we can see to be more than themselves and that obedience we can bring within the field of our worship; but the spawning and cheapening of natural life is something from which our God-given instinct tells us we are made to differ. We are not to act like brute beasts that have no understanding; and though God brings good out of it, and though a trickery of contraceptives may be damning as no parentage is, we are shocked to hear of mothers in their teens already overburdened with children. But let the persons live in the act, with mutual intelligence, conscience and devotion all operating, and what is present is something more —

infinitely more — than any sub-human life force. And the consenting faith is a trust in life *on earth*, a procreation under the prayer that heaven may come on earth. It is so great a faith as to be in modern times too difficult for one alone, especially for the one not called upon to carry the child, and to risk, perhaps, disablement or death. Man, troubled and detached, will then need the faith of woman, who is so differently made, to complete his own. For there will come a day, or perhaps an isolating midnight, when he will realise that upon another has fallen the weight of his agency, and when (himself more humbled because undisturbed in body) he will cry from his heart, *Not her life but mine!* And if no misadventure intervene, and nothing to deny and break maternal hope, it will be then a light thing to accept every duty of fatherhood.

IV

We must keep the eternal triangle. Sexually different in body and mind, humanly different also in personal character (and frequently so honest about the faults of the other!) man and wife need to be joined by lines that converge overhead, as well as those which run directly from each to each. It is not required that the apex should be conscious faith in God. Whatever is above the passions that overwhelm to deceive, and is constant and kind, well may serve.

Amongst socialist comrades to whom the externals of marriage were nothing, one friend of mine, long ago, believed in souls (strictly temporal) roaming in search of the perfect mate. But he was already married, and the soul for which he felt himself to have been born was not his wife. He had but one life to live, he said, and all existence for him was in union with this richer personality, this woman who so fully shared his public interests. But the wife clung, and the unmarried woman would not force into misery a socialist sister. Probably she was not tempted to the full; but I knew the story from all three sides, and knew how a compassionate feeling of one woman for another stood against passionate importunity. At last, with the marriage unbroken, husband and wife went far away, to a new environment. The union was saved not by love of God, for there was little faith in him, but by a human regard, a tenderness for kind, which acted instead.

But I know and the reader knows the more common stories: of deserted wives, of deserted husbands, and of enduring partners whom, if they had been less enduring, we would have forgiven. Yet there was within my family circle one who left wife and children (not unprovided for) and whose greater content and happiness in

the unregistered union was such that the best Christian I **knew**, with her home always open to the forsaken wife, still would never in any degree share or encourage the deserted woman's sense of bitter grievance.

What law is there for marriage? None that must exclude consideration and reconsideration, both shrewd and kind, of every not irresponsible breach. Yet law there is, nevertheless, an august law, epitomising faith and experience, sacred for that reason, and to be kept in will and desire, as well as outwardly and for the common good. During their first year, how many now-settled wives and now-confirmed husbands have contemplated separation? Child or children, family influence, conservative hesitation, fear of opinion, economic needs, all hold the married together. But parentage apart, such bonds do not join what is unfused within. Chained friends, coldly tolerant partners, sometimes jealous foes, is what they force together. If life is to have meaning and freedom of energy, there must be a high, common loyalty, a law above and a sustenance within.

It is when the wonder and mystery of life enjoin marriage and interpenetrate marriage that spirits are fused. Then, as a mutually-willed and completed union renews and rejoices mind and body, the relationship of marriage, with all its sincerities of lasting obligation, is itself a wonder and a joy. Then, with the dedication of each to each implicitly felt as freshly establishing troth through the bodily act, the intimacy is indeed sacramental. *With my body I thee worship.* It is an increasing kinship which yet has within it always something new and strange. Happily, no doubt, for any two normal people the passion for union to be absolute never can reach that end; and in its wholeness the passion itself may rarely come; yet one revelation is all but enough. Honour for the quality of it is that which can make married abstinence a satisfying self-denial. We refrain because we would have nothing below the highest good.

If marriage is no more than a private affair, any counsel from others becomes impertinent. But, however a century of independence has established the present walk to the registrar's office, marriage is no disconnected, casual event. Patriarchal or communal dictation will not return; but communal help will re-establish itself even here. Social organisations have never ceased to bring young people together, knowingly and with at least some negative responsibility. Knowledge for the married is diffused by science, and intimate problems are stated and discussed in biographic and serious fiction. Blindfold ignorance, such as I have heard a victim of it

condemn, is gone. But these aids do not react to conscious, third-party assistance. A wealth of knowledge stays separate and secret amidst a multitude of doctors, nurses, solicitors, priests and public men and women. In relation to individuals, of course, it is properly secret. But there are common and group facts also, which systematically should be gathered together and explored and published.

The huntress of Shaw's plays should not be driven to hunt, nor women born for affection be left to the solace of cats and dogs. If by widening and multiplying means of contact we can prevent it, neither should the right partner be found too late. And never should intense personal difficulties be ignored on the ground of being wholly individual, until pride struggling alone, or a humbler, defeated solitariness, takes this or that member of the community past the breaking point. What is good for us to know? Where are wisdom and patience in their strength? Brought to confession and illumination, grief can be healed, or at least made less.

But not only in pity, as from the whole to the suffering, should the wider interest be available. It is better to learn from health than pathologically from disease. Of the good and happy marriages, as of the happier celibacies, we hear least. Marriage, ancient marriage, the condition from which have issued most souls living, is not new to the love of God and man. The aid it can give to the establishment of the meaning of life amongst individuals and in the community is something required for the health of us all; and this goodness we shall seek.

Chapter XII

THE GOOD SOCIETY

I

WITH their high gleams and cleansing rains, their cold winds of denial and skies inhumanly clear, the Tolstoyan years were past. I came once more to the plains of earth, but with new understanding. In no arrogant way, but with submission, I knew whose ground it was, and by what will and for what ends we men were upon it. No machinery, no organisation, no nation or state henceforward would absorb my faith; but neither would I distrust and reject things of

use. Socialism, in particular, would be an idea and a method, something to be employed and judged by its results.

For social politics the time was hopeful. Although reared in Toryism, I had seen with no enthusiasm the string of Tory years. But Gladstonianism Liberalism had been no better. Now had come the new Liberalism, instructed by the Fabians, influenced by rising Labour, and led by that honesty which had so famously revolted against "methods of barbarism." Occupying no more than half a cobblestone, in the January of 1906 I stood jammed amidst an enormous crowd, awaiting declarations of poll. Night cloaked the Manchester grime, and the tower of the Victorian-Gothic Town Hall rose above us all in solemn dignity. Figures appeared on a lit screen and ten thousand voices roared approval. The cheering swept the square, gale on gale. There had been no such turnover during my working years, nor would there be. Balfour, almost spat upon in his old Manchester constituency, was overwhelmed! every Tory was out; Clynes, the Oldham ex-labourer, had won in Manchester; and the poet and Radical, Belloc, was returned in a Salford neither sodden nor unkind.

During the exciting days of those prolonged elections, similar victories followed. No politician, I could yet rejoice at the triumphs of men whom I knew: Snowden, MacDonald, Jowett of Bradford, Parker of Halifax, and the others of a solid forty—including the miners—of the new party of Labour.

It was not all a cheat. The South African settlement, the Old Age Pensions, the Trade Boards, the feeding and care of school children, the Employment Exchanges, the instalment of unemployment insurance, the equalising trend of the next Budgets and the political democracy of the Parliament Act, seemed to be transforming the state into that servant of the people for which we at the street corners had cried out, in wind and rain. Visiting the courts of Parliament, not again would I see only the tall figures and fine clothes of a throng almost alien. Always there would be friends, less smart and commanding, and unattended by delicately swathed and glittering women, but plain and of the people. Nevertheless, having taken part in contests for democratic power, I could not do other than wonder whether these old comrades would not be themselves absorbed. Gazing at the stonework and glass of Sir Charles Barry's palace, one of them had said, "You can't feel revolutionary in a place like this!" And behind the "place like this" was the world's widest empire, authoritarian, armed, proud.

Retreat solved no problem of power; yet it was satisfying to

return—as indeed I had to do—to my post in the free collectivism of the co-operative movement. Consumers' co-operation was unfashionable, out of the news, and in practice sectarian; but for me its doors had opened, and had not to be forced. Building up its small, household magazine, usually in provincial seclusion but (in search for the available best) sometimes at the edge of a larger and livelier sphere, I found myself not cloistered but now watching human nature in a social laboratory, and now looking out as from an observatory. Trusted as being within the one business organisation and subject to it, and therefore the more freely supplied, I travelled for information from office to saleroom, saleroom to bank, bank to mill, works and factory, wider afield to farms and ships, and outward to retail stores. My surveys were of a small but different industrial England, a little social democracy, yet contained within the nation, and not separate and apart. Though it was their own property, with a claim upon them for loyal support, the owning millions put the organisation into competition, to supply, like the free capitalist, by their consumers' consent. Or the system did that for them.

Not of the capitalist world, we were still amidst it.

Every profession and business, of course, has its own internal interests; but co-operative business was not and is not one section of some general business including all classes within it. The control is more proletarian than in the Labour Party, and is as much (or more) in lay hands than is that of the trade unions. At the same time, unlike those bodies, it includes the economic round: domestic buying, selling, making, growing, importing, publishing, teaching, governing. Yet again, it does not end with business. In the huge yearly congresses, and especially in the frequent local conferences in co-operative halls followed by substantial teas in co-operative rooms, there is a friendliness and a heartiness that go back through Nonconformity to the fraternity of medieval feasts.

No observatory is at rest. The wheeling skies witness that it is a flying tower. My small look-out took its way through each economic crisis: the panics of 1914; the food queues met by the co-operative, internal rationing which to the nation was an example and a proof, and the inflationary price increases that brought new masses of consumers into a system which countered exploitation. Amidst these, came the Russian revolution. "The Tsar Abdicates." A quarter of a century had made me familiar with free Russia's hopeless hope; and though I was ill in bed when the headline

shouted from its page, despite the war propaganda that was given as further news, it was another dawn in which to be alive.

Twelve months onwards, the gentle half-sunshine of an English November day illumined city streets where, surely as never before for an armistice, an unrestrainable joy of deliverance sang and danced.

This is the age of mass emergence, and history does not go back; yet what I saw was a red sky at morning. While the peace for which in Manchester we crowded to cheer the top-hatted Wilson was lost, ever-mounting prices burdened fathers and mothers until at last the orgy collapsed, and the weight was shifted to workers on short time and the unemployed. Great strikes threatened revolution and failed; and the co-operatives, falsely reported as planning to divert all foodstuffs to industrial rebels in the first upheaval, were themselves the chief sufferers in the last. The two Labour governments rose and fell, the economic blizzard howling around the second ruin. In South Wales it became possible to see the 1918 victory's derelict towns: the broken and boarded windows of streets of empty shops; miners' own, slowly-acquired houses for sale at any price; and desolation walking in ancient black where dole-fed men, two by two, followed a work-mate's funeral.

We looked on the promises of the time when money was flowing out for war and we looked on this, and forgot that wages were falling less than prices; and that the full story was not of unemployment only, since for the majority in full work spending power was substantially gaining. In millions of new houses, and also in the old, new varieties of food, innumerable new modes of furnishing, and equally new pleasures in dress, satisfied personal tastes within millions of families. Thousands of new motor buses penetrated where railways had not gone; cinemas multiplied, and cafés and swimming pools; parties of working people toured the country, and a new organisation, the Workers' Travel Association, taking scores of thousands of new tourists overseas, increased from year to year. Greater London added three-quarters of a million to its population in ten years, and the wealthy county of Middlesex housed a people more numerous by thirty per cent. The Quennells in 1935 could publish a book on "The Good New Days."

Speaking of the inflationary period, a famous organiser for women's trade unions told me how easy it had been then to get more wages. Few employers objected to giving the workers sixpence (or fourpence) and collecting a shilling from the consumers! Real wages, later on, might be demonstrably higher; yet by Labour men,

as distinct from the consuming masses, the nominal loss was the fact advertised, and not the gain. Ten years onward from the lost eldorado of nominal ever-increasing wages, the astonishing electoral, sound-money triumph of 1931, therefore, like the Munich Settlement across the path of war, did not reverse the trend of opinion arising from all the mutual forces of organised capital and organised labour. Never had I been interested in monetary discussion. The moneyless dealings of *News from Nowhere* remained more to my taste. But experience made me wise.

It was little gold that I was receiving in July, 1914; but it had intrinsic value. I could not eat it—though as a stopping I could eat with its like. Without the inconvenience of barter, it was a payment in kind. The paper that followed had no intrinsic worth. The value depended on the policy of the state; and aware by 1920 of how money could be printed, and of how unequally the paper always fluttered down, the new dependence hardly cheered my non-political mind. Perhaps the man from behind the red flag on the Edgware Road needed to be warned that he was falling behind the newer vanguard, for whom the ancient symbol of avarice (however innocent in itself, as God gave it) was becoming as machines were to the Luddites, inevitably a curse.

Co-operative business, in its degree, assisted employment. The minimum standards which it recognised added to family purchasing power, and so did its distribution of surpluses on cost mainly to those families of consumers most needing to spend, and therefore most solidly contributing to demand. The co-operatives fixed no limits to salaries, yet did in practice build a ceiling. This also was useful; for the good society is neither a dead level nor all peaks and valleys. It is not that a huge income can never be earned. The material services of John Wesley to Britain and America in creating sobriety and faithfulness in work may have been worth a hundred thousand a year. But he was too much of a gentleman ever to take such pay for himself. Acquisitiveness is largely competitive. *They* get more; why not we? *He* gets; why not I? More sharing; less inequality: they are two sides of the same thing. And more equal spending is spending for steadier employment. In its small degree, this was the betterment that I lived amongst.

But co-operative business had no power to establish that right to work—right and not a gift in charity—which is inherent in the willing man. That was to be met by national agreements of employers each to absorb his proportion of the workless, a workless lessened in number, no doubt, by a reduced pensionable age, and

possibly by a collective group emigration, state assisted, of whole townships together. In any case, as opposite to printing more and more paper money, the real methods were the honest methods. And for creating employment or devaluing the exaggerated national debt, the honest methods were direct and open.

But my social views, which had been too far in front, now were too far behind.

II

In 1899 I had sought co-operative employment not only to live but to live less unsocially. That nineteenth-century date was, for me, still pre-Tolstoyan; and to live socially meant living for the workers. To help the working class this apparently old-fashioned and unexciting form of business somehow stood. Of any deeper co-operative history or principles I knew nothing. With the great and honourable exception of the Webbs, socialist thinkers had ignored a movement so widely reformist, if not basely commercial. The high Co-operative Commonwealth we socialists talked about, was not to be reached by dividend-hunting and accumulating small savings. To raise money for politics, socialist co-operatives had been started; but these little, untidy stores, failing in drab streets, were but sidelines at best. Of orthodox co-operation the appreciated side seemed to be expressed by the fellow-clerk who told me, as a newcomer, that "the Committee" (the C.W.S. Board) "are bound to look after you." It was their duty to the workers. If there was a further merit it was that, to spend on the workers, the co-operatives attempted to rationalise distribution and save waste. For this reason as well as on account of the working-class proprietorship, a leading anarchist-communist meeting me at Balloon Street (just previously the United States had put him into political quarantine on Ellis Island) so enthusiastically had praised the hiding of all that massive brickwork in a side street. Here was success without landlords' harvests from ostentatious city frontages! There was less for the public to gaze upon, but more for the workers.

These old simplicities the Tolstoyan years subjected to that great Russian's rural criticisms; while the working hours spent in the observation post concurrently brought urban and English qualifications. But to begin with, I came accepting the substance of political Marxianism. *Workers of the world, to you the world belongs! History demands that you take as you must what is your own! Accept the class war that now denies your will to live! Win, and let your victory merge class in the classless society! Only then will you get fraternity! Workers of the world, unite to win! Well,*

trade unionism remained necessary, and social reorganisation to include an equalitarian and friendly place for every worker. And to help on the way, the spirit of fraternity should be expressed now.

There was and is room. A busy Labour leader will pick up the trick of addressing an inconvenient constituent as "Brother," while as swiftly getting rid of him. It would be a practical step if every man in power began to regard the other man's time as equal in value with his own! Middle or upper-class Marxists will be poetically fervent for the workers without testing by experience proletarian ownership and control; whereas to gain real knowledge would be more useful. Meanwhile, from 1900 to 1910, it grew upon me that the "worker" of socialist propaganda was an idealisation, and that the socialism based upon him was abstract and unreal.

To say nothing of the world, this country was no pod of identical peas. Jobs were different; men were different; and results from the same time on the same job differed. It was elementary, also, to pick out the intelligent man from the dull, the quick from the slow, and the interested man, caring for his machine, from the careless and wasteful. The mass separations of skilled from less skilled and of grade from grade, besides being clumsily and partially effected still left individual variations crying out for individual recognition. Pressing upon the human contrasts came the economic: the uneven conditions between the steady "bread and butter" trades and those depending on fashion or the seasons, between the new, expanding trades and old, declining industries; and between working for prosperous markets and working within the vicious circle formed where the poor have to labour for the poor.

History had not yet looked at distressed areas in their contrast with the homes of sheltered trades—in our bygone picturing of capitalist misery, we had not imagined such contrasts between workers and workers. Even so, and without counting the "key" man in comparison with the supernumeraries, or the mechanical producer beside the craftsman little helped by machines, or considering the larger matter of land workers' conditions and pay in contrast with those of workers escaping from nature into eight-hour factories, the fissures and cleavages were evident. Co-operative fellow-employees of mine worked in Europe, Africa, India and Ceylon; but I did not need to add this further problem, nor ask why two words "Chinese Labour," had proved so infuriating to British workers during the general election of 1906. Without peering into the gulfs of nationality, race and colour, I saw it to be evident that

workers, as workers, were quite unlikely to form any simple union for the mastery of the world.

Under circumstances ever-changing but always unequal, at our tasks, during working hours, as workers we were and would continue to be servants. Service could and should be honoured, rewarded and lifted up; but, however of the people, the uniting and controlling power must proceed from some other source than labour.

To you the world belongs! The doctrine of all wealth being due to the workers is, of course, old in British social history, although here as elsewhere the air we breathe is plainly the gift of God, and is no more to any human credit than the sunshine or the rain. There are other gifts, too: of abundance from good seasons; of minerals easily won; of forests and rivers; of natural harbours; of fish in shoals; of edible fruits and pastures unsown; of nature's free responses, and of our very selves. But not to intrude religion, the indoor, daily business facts also reduced the claim. Your new product met a public want, and first sales paid for initial costs; or a mass of small payments hardly noticed by your public swelled reward; or you were well-placed to sell with profit at a price fixed by consumers' competition; or invention made material profitable which had been waste; or machinery was better employed; or some unnecessary other expense was discovered and saved. Gain in such cases, like the profit and loss from changes in money and stock values, or in buying habits, showed little relation to wages. Wage-costs differed as work differed. Here they could be doubled with little effect on a vast volume of mechanical, standard output. There a small advance must affect price and sales at once.

That pay should be safe from fluctuations quite outside the workers' efforts, and that it should be sufficient to carry a decent standard of living and be openly reasonable in all circumstances, remained true. But it is not through labour only nor through wages only, that the good society should profit the people.

To expand the ordinary sense of the word "worker," British socialists have added the belated, second thought of "by hand or brain." It is an expansion that confuses rather than widens. It admits the cushioned office-holder, whose brains are rules and precedents; it limits by inference the machine-minder whose attention is of the mind; yet still it leaves unclosed the real gap. The division is between wage-earners by quantity, who are individually replaceable, and managers and officials whose value is not only technical but also derives from trustworthiness, sense of responsibility, judgment, tact, moral courage, capacity for good relations,

and all the subtle and spiritual qualities that make up personality.

Now it is very true that moral qualities are not in the least the special property of any grade or class. The likely privates of industry and the corporals and sergeants share them with the higher ranks. Observation did not require me to go back upon any comradeship. What I saw was diversity of qualities in all ranks, a diversity intensified from original gifts. Where else than amongst the masses should we look, especially, for the virtues that bind a people together? Solidarity, loyalty to workmates, neighbourly kindness, patience, dogged courage, strength in endurance, common sense and humorous sociability, all were to be expected. These qualities, too, were everywhere; but in a special degree, co-operative history showed them to be present and active amongst the common people. Yet leadership is as necessary; and here the endowments were individual and rare. Once in human life divine responsibility was accepted, and the acceptance justified; but the burden made of its bearer the loneliest of men. Infinitely below that height, the principle is the same. Great or small, the leader must be individual.

Workers by hand or brain! When the strength of the great majority was in its relative freedom from individualising qualities and egoistic temptations, how was it (or how were men elected for their likeness to it) able to rule justly those whose differences from the mass equally are necessary to a good society? "A manager by day and a servant by night!" bitterly remarked a co-operative official, speaking of a former position as manager of a factory under its workers' control. "They reduced the hours," said another official who had held a similar position—also speaking of the men in the factory—"but expected the same financial results. To get those was the manager's job!" "Nothing would induce me to change places with him," an employer's secretary, who was himself a socialist, told me of his opposite number, the trade union secretary and nominal leader; and then he gave me cogent reasons.

These experiences were of small-scale, direct control, and the business I served escaped such difficulties; for the government was that of millions of members, in the manner of a centralised social democracy. But under the power of a propaganda that blurs and shirks the real problem, and passes the danger of it on to a possibly revolutionary future, that which is put through the door can return by the window. Although more perceptive themselves, the directors of the huge centralised business had to bow to that large majority of delegates requiring the Board to bring every employee and official under its control into membership of some recognised trade union.

However single a man's work might be and whatever his position, he was to enrol just as if he was not individual in his job but was subject to collective bargaining. Credentials were to be scrutinised and any man without them dismissed. At that time I had been a trade union member continuously for thirty years; yet, when I saw on one side timid and insincere compliance, and, on another, honesty, independence and long service thrust out, I felt not a victory for a good society but a defeat.

A proletariat black-coated (or old-tweed-jacketed) inhabits offices and shops; nevertheless the industrial ranks are not described by assuming a population arranged according to the physical faculties in use. To speak, instead, of an officer class would be to invite misunderstanding. It would suggest a military picture neither necessary nor desired. Any use of the word "class" is now open to prejudice; and the western world includes no fixed classes. The old Lancashire proverb of three generations from clogs to clogs, still stands. However, we have a middle order, and it steadily recruits from the mass. Seeing workers' leaders arise and their sons with scholarships becoming professional men, and their children by educated wives continuing on, I could observe the process at work, just as I could meet proletarians whose forbears had been higher in the world. If the changes masked a tendency for like (once established) to reproduce like, and so create hereditary grades, that is another matter. It is something to investigate. More to the point, here, is the conclusion which forced itself upon me, namely, that society normally contains and needs a recognised category of organisers or managers—and probably includes and requires other particular orders, each with its own responsibilities and standards of honour, although all within one over-riding, common, human bond. Destroy such orders, as revolutions have destroyed them, and in altered forms, either better or worse, and after heavy social losses, slowly those orders will grow up and separate themselves again.

It was no accident that the deep human unity felt by Paul the tent-maker first stirred the hearts of individual men and women from the mass, yet that in the amphitheatres the mass was of one quality and the martyrs of another. Those futurists died both for their Leader and for the blinded many; and only the spirit which so comprehends such opposites will keep civilisation alive. Even in the commonplace business world, the most complete machine will not run itself; and quite non-mechanical jobs still are numerous throughout our economy. Everyday, good faith and responsibility in the ranks are affected by controls coming either from colourless

officials or, humanly, from men of leadership. The abuses of differentiation: the using of the mass to climb over it; the scorn of the ruck; the pride of claims for class achievements no longer present and real; and the perpetuation of past aggrandisements—these cause natural truths to be trampled underfoot. If in this age of the multitude and the mechanical we move toward the elimination of everything unconformable with mass sentiment, we invite the demagogue, the yes-man, and debasement.

What are the forms of order and leadership if we lose the understanding and the moral courage of service which is individual? But only truth lives; and knowledge will prevail. Then we shall see that the strength of the mass is in adding that strength to each; and that the greatness of the individual is when he upholds that which the mass would welcome and hold precious if it knew where its welfare lay.

III

My journey was no pilgrimage to the Right or to the Left. I wanted nothing more than to live, and in living to understand; and the spirit of understanding permits nothing doctrinaire. Judas was individual; Judas accepted responsibility; and Judas stood alone; whereas mass sentiment has ended child labour and a hundred inhumanities. Whatever the fixed ideas, when under co-operative or any other employment a body of men saw one of their number unjustly dismissed, and joined together to demand reinstatement, workers' unity needed no apology. On the other hand, when during the strikes of 1926 a model colliery agreed with the miners and not with the employers, and was losing money by it, and yet was thrown idle for seventeen weeks, and when, in that year's general strike, food supplies for strikers' families and even strike pay from the bank were held up by the strikers' uniform blockade, the dogmatically-held doctrine of unity of all labour became worse than foolish.

Neither tables nor the rules of grammar, however, are any less indisputable for being kept in their place; and with the claims for labour revalued and brought down to what seems to be their true position, what secular element is left to complete the basis necessary to a good society?

After the first world war I could no longer hope for a transformation of the state into an organ of service. The social services derived from Bismarck's Germany: the national libraries, galleries and museums were consistent with totalitarianism, and so was the B.B.C. As already said, the often-quoted Post Office originated as an organ of authoritative oversight. Liberal administration, especially in

education, was the most to be hoped for. It was no negligible gain; nevertheless, while rural commons could be turned over to the army, and citizenship had to be paid for by submitting to conscription, the state, it was clear, would be master rather than servant and friend. Capitalism was infamous for its crises and bankruptcies; while the state apparently could shoulder any burden to keep business going and its people employed. But the experience of other countries showed the cost. Poverty was not prevented. It was only more evenly spread. Whole nations descended to the lowest level of subsistence, surrendering consumers' liberty to an iron control.

Conservative, liberal, socialist, communist, fascist—no one again would doubt the potential utility of the state. The chilling prospects were those of an exchange of the private profit motive for one of state power, of private invoices replaced by authoritarian demand notes, of private trade advertisements yielding to statutory orders, of individual business losses and individual unemployment giving way to bureaucratic directions, fines and imprisonment. Yet is not the state ourselves? In that simple sense it is not. Long-established voluntary organisations tend to draw to themselves special types, and then within each special circle develop a separate, institutional self-regard. The heavy power of the state does the same thing superlatively. Thus there comes a division between the political and official body acting in the name of the people, and the many who are acted upon. At twenty I knew nothing of this; but at forty I knew something; and at sixty I knew more.

Fortunately, long before reaching middle-age, I had learned to recognise in the British co-operative movement an element potentially richer than the organisations themselves. This was an element not present in the old capitalist individualism, nor in the new corporative, big business functionalism, and not to be found at all in economic absolutism.

To be Irish and intelligent may or may not be the same thing, but it was an Irish colleague long ago who so lucidly explained co-operative business to me in terms of consumers' ownership and control. The ideas were from Rochdale; but to the Owenites of 1844 they were unknown. The originator was J. T. W. Mitchell, the unfathered son "dragged up from a cellar," the born commander of men whose whole life was single and simple in its devotion, the homely, kindly, big man to whose mind and purpose Mrs. Sidney Webb paid attention as Beatrice Potter, and whom, in her later years, she still described as "a genius." Developed from the bold, oratorical sketches which were all that this busy man of action left

behind him, Mitchell's picture is of industry existing neither for profit nor employment and wages, nor for the state. Under any free, natural economy, industry begins and ends with consumers' wants. Consciously or not, the consumer controls. Control, said Mitchell, should be knowingly and collectively exercised; and (since all peoples in all lands are consumers) to their acting together there is no final limit except that which is wrong in themselves.

Consumers' co-operation shows the action begun. Labour and capital become the consumers' agents; the prices paid to the co-operative by its customer-owners are advances to cover the agents' costs; and the return (the dividend on purchases) is surplus over cost, coming back chiefly to housewives spending for their families—that is, to those most needing such a return.

On this model, by a gradual redirection of purchases, extending to all consumers through generations ahead, all industry (again said Mitchell) can be transferred quietly and without any abnormal disturbance to the ownership of the world's peoples, through their societies and federations. And what is even more important, every fraction transferred will be concurrently redirected to the intentional satisfaction of the peoples' known, organised wants. Thus will supply and demand balance, and unemployment end, in an economy not fashioned from above or below, but shaped by everybody as consumers, according to their own needs, as felt and expressed by themselves.

When in later years I tried to describe to co-operative students these possibilities in their own movement, they found my words abstract and elusive. I could sympathise. The whole conception had once seemed airy to me. All the old propaganda stood between us and the facts. In the same way, the term "worker" was as little concrete before tuition and long usage gave it solidity. My hearers could feel and act as consumers; but few of them could think to any purpose along such unfamiliar lines.

None the less, that wants come before the labour to supply them, that we are consumers before we are old enough to work, and that resources have value when they supply all these human needs, are propositions that a child could grasp. The creators of the significant myth of Adam and Eve were clear about it. Use and enjoyment governed work, and out of joy came praise. Natural things, grasses, trees, the simplest, moving cells, build up or reach out only to possess, use and live. Communally, in his groups and tribes, primitive man joined his labour to his wants; and English medieval villagers equally laboured for their own supply, whether of food, clothing, or

carved woodwork in their churches. There was little change until opportunity awoke the hunger for those bigger things which enlarged London and sent Dick Whittington there. Then, in that wider world, unity was lost. Between consumer and producer came a lengthening chain of merchants. In the early eighteenth century a pamphleteer wrote violently about the cheating and oppression of "every buyer and consumer" by "this villainous Cabal and Confederacy of Bloodsuckers." Indeed, at the very beginning of the modern separation, although less from the soap box than as the poet, *Piers Plowman* assailed retailers in words which, in the twentieth century, I found almost identically (yet unknowingly) repeated by village co-operators

But the process went on. At last, consumers as such were shut out of industry. It became the private battle ground of capital and labour. Consumers had neither rights nor responsibilities. But industry had to sell to live, as consumers had to buy. So the buyers returned, but now without humanity, as merely "the market." And the market was a mob of competitors, each buying for self or self's family. But, disorganised, the consumer was still the master, so that industry became disorganised, too, and a gambler's and exploiter's field. Suffering as poor consumers, and then again as poor workers, by their very mass the people still commanded; yet all unconscious of their strength. If that strength has enforced rationing, it was for war rather than for any conscious consumers' aims.

"This overgrown city," Defoe's London, first saw a complete separation of consumers and producers in masses; and a generation later a consumers' counter-effort appeared. Workmen in the Thames and Medway government dockyards acted as if by instinct. Somehow, and at first unnoticed, they acquired their own flour mills for their own daily bread. They failed, and others failed; and bemused by Owen and his propagandists the men who began again at Rochdale and through instinctive good sense won, did not know what they had won. Like Columbus, what they discovered they misnamed. British co-operation still misnames. It speaks of "dividends," but not meaning what others mean; and it describes members as "shareholders" when the claims are only upon money credited, for the members' "shares" (never bought or sold) represent no fixed proportion of the real collective properties. However, the members understand. As consumers they use the system, and as consumers they benefit. And during my time, from fewer than half a million in obscurest Industria, the membership has grown to several

millions, now spread into the rural districts, the seaside towns, the cathedral and university cities, and most of London.

Amidst the astonishing inventions and discoveries during my life-time, triumphs both stimulated and chastened by wars and revolutions, few observers would trouble to notice the co-operative extension. Co-operative business is indeed a leaden casket, however commercially polished up. It is a big container; but, again, the value is in the idea concealed within. Speakers and writers still discuss industry as existing for its gains, or to give employment, or assist Britain, or to attain all three ends and be well content. Meanwhile, and once more, poor and ignorant laymen and their successors have shown by a century of accomplishment that industry best succeeds when it is directed to serve consumers' organised wants. On this simple basis, a hundred businesses had been brought together by the federation that employed me, and with pooled results sufficient to cover all needs and yet give back in millions, to the purchasing masses, the surplus over cost that domestic spendings had provided. Slighted by socialists, plotted against by capitalism, undermined by the state, this distribution was the fairest that any economy had yet seen, as the whole system behind it was the most workable compromise between individualism and communism that the empirical genius of Britain has yet contrived.

Criticism could not be denied. Mitchell's ideas were grandiose. The consumer, like the worker, is many-headed. When will Bond Street join with Bow, or the millions of American consumers cross the colour line? If it has taken a century to enrol less than half Britain, what time will be needed for the world's two thousand millions? How can any one construction be flexible enough for every need? The results shown seem pretty good, but what is behind the scenes? An old co-operative official, now deceased, once lamented to me that "Our directors are not gentlemen." Pressed for his opinion of the officials he met, a private merchant dealing widely with co-operative departments, and himself a socialist, spoke sadly of them as "only mediocre." A continental co-operator wrote caustically of co-operative employees in his own country as living "like mites in cheese." Opponents said that the dividends were specially charged for in the prices. Of the millions of members it was no secret that perhaps only one-fiftieth constituted any active "movement." But if all these things were true, so much the more astonishing was the success.

Over-bearing, shallow, pretentious leaders; dull, unimaginative officials; easy-going workers, opinionated, self-sufficient, too busy

members—I knew all these; but not there was the strength. In the homes of unknown cooperators I met self-respecting, reasonable, friendly, happy families; and if local difficulties threatened the life of any society, a steadfast core of such supporters nearly always could be found. Particular memories arise. I recollect an elected president whom poverty had compelled to go to work at nine and steal raw turnips from the fields on the way to stifle hunger, but who—self-educated—was always intelligently a leader, always of proved moral courage, and always a gentleman. I remember an official who was also a gentleman in the fine sense of being a friend to great and small, however below himself in rank the small might be. I think of another and another, gentlemen as well, even at the cost of burdens upon themselves. I recall old admirations: for a former official become an important, salaried, elected head and still setting his pioneer hand to a killing weight of tasks, yet ever emerging with a boyish smile; for a woman in co-operative high office doubling her efforts to make sure of an open and honourable way for any sister who might follow; for a co-operative society's buyer who by his conspicuously fair dealing won the sure attachment of every rural supplier; of a local, ex-workman official taxing himself beyond any daily duty in order to pioneer low-rented, better housing for his people and co-operative clubs open to wives; of the loyal, mercantile head whom I knew to have declined a coveted, private appointment at twice his co-operative salary. And still the list extends: to the leader whose apparent tranquil, co-operative devotion was his honourable escape from bitter home troubles; to the unflattering chief whose good words for others always were given in their absence and when most needed; to the manager privately standing for justice to his workers where his support of them was unpopular with his directors and was to his own disadvantage; to the work-girl at the after-hours lecture in the co-operative factory who, in apology for her silence during the discussion of a lecture on co-operative history, said with her eyes shining, "It's all too wonderful!"

One-time, pretended exposures of co-operative "graft," in the House of Commons and by a section of the London press, died at birth; for those were honest men among whom I worked.

In this factory and that I looked around. Vistas of lit benches, of electrically-driven machines, of lively, cheerful employees, of piled, bright materials and general colour and animation, changed any despondency to pleasure. Or with an under-manager I toured the many departments of a centralised, mass-producing factory, or with the manager of a great farm I went round an estate, or with a

practical mining head I crouched at a coal face, and again in each case I came away cheered. Every year, before Christmas, I heard a thousand cooperative business men in their hall on their market day, singing carols together and not thinking it strange; or each Whitsuntide I looked round from a press table upon two thousand delegates joining their voices to the thunders of the organ as a preliminary to business.

In a world indifferent to its best, the co-operative reintegration of the home and the mill moved heavily, but it did move.

IV

Even while I followed the co-operative advance, my journeys took me past the capitalist shops, warehouses, offices and banks still unceasingly lining the chief streets of London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and all the great towns. Co-operative buildings more and more broke into the lines, but never more than at widely separated points, and to extend the array rather than to diminish the other occupants. Well-to-do socialists, habitually supporting capitalist services almost without noticing it, simultaneously could hail communism in Russia and at home. I had to be more realistic. Labour partisans would protest that for small wage-earners no real consumers' choice was possible. The pit of the truck system from which their grandfathers had painfully struggled, they forgot. Sixty years after its legal abolition, I, "living in," had been in the pit. With this experience of food and lodging absolutely without choice, I knew how much belonged even to the poorest. And I knew that the shopkeepers knew, and were not reaping wholly from the prosperous nor eking out by dealing with each other. Corner shops, fixed-price bazaars, speciality shops, departmental stores, and a miscellany of other retailers freely attracted co-operative members and other working people still worse off. What was it that decided the customers' choice? Simply by spending, co-operative members had acquired individual credits and collective wealth apparently from nothing. This lesson had gone round the world. Thirty countries had learned from Rochdale. At home, a majority saw and passed by. Were these people simply foolish?

Wilfred Owen, and companions of his in the trenches of 1915-18, developed a respect for their adversaries; and in the contest for consumers' suffrages we learned not to underrate the other side. We admired neither cheap labour, nor ruthless buying, nor tricky advertising, nor monopolistic possession and conditions of sale. It was where the winning force came from superiority in initiative, imagina-

tion and invention, that ordinary honesty acknowledged it—as private merchants, on their side, would admit successes of ours. Personal needs compelled me to widen my own admissions. Neither for food or clothing was I built to pattern. This misfortune sometimes I could overcome. In other cases, individual wants required individual supply. But private, capitalist success with mass production had to be conceded also, and to me again the fact could not be other than specially apparent

British co-operators had owned a newspaper since 1870. They were printing and publishing ten years before the first popular miscellany of scraps and stories was collecting the pennies of the intellectually humble. The new journalism was a joke; but it showed the way into the people's homes for millions of copies of daily and Sunday issues to follow. And millions of pennies were collected, each meaning power freely conferred by the masses upon those who had stooped to this new public. The productions multiplied during nearly fifty years before the consumers' own movement seriously entered the same field; and then the Sunday paper, *Reynolds News*, was bought for political propaganda rather than for general home reading. If the politics were legitimate, so was the other need. But others, better-placed than myself, also failed to arouse in a rich and powerful body the spirit required for journalistic enterprise. I had to see capitalism continuing to include, unchallenged, a service declined by a professed supplanter of capitalism, theoretically more ready to serve.

Capitalism was not something far off. It was no novelty for touring deputations glowingly to report upon. It had built the slums; but, progressively, it had also housed and was housing the people. Most of us lived within its works. It was here to criticise and quarrel with and for co-operative officials it was (though rarely) an alternative employer. One of the ablest of my colleagues went over. He joined a big, private company, making and marketing a complex speciality. Plunging from safety, he dived to sink or swim. In work that was honest enough, yet could never have been mine, he brilliantly succeeded. Capitalism, he explained to me later—for I understood his position and we remained old friends—being lower in its professions, was more accommodating to human nature and therefore less hypocritical. That might be so; but what I could see for myself was (on that level) a wider scope for personal energy, and, in my friend's chief, a deeper regard for his lieutenant's achievement and personal loyalty. In short, there was a value not to be rejected. Through that saving enlistment of individual qualities, the profit

motive, although materially dominant, could be regarded as lightly as a run-getter might regard his score, when finding a major pleasure in meeting and beating the bowling. I had experienced capitalist employment almost at its lowest, and through the friction of the round hole upon the contrary peg; and for me my friend's larger experience provided a lesson. Scope for personality was something to be preserved.

Exploring on my own side, often I found records of nominally co-operative action resolving themselves, on enquiry, into something more individual. With or without backing from one or two like himself, one man had led (or dominated) a committee, or had developed an enterprise, or created a new co-operative industry. But the man had not cared to chisel his own monument, and the work had passed as collective. Later on, the very stability of the pioneer's erection had made it less dependent upon such initiative. Then came the time for no man to be irreplaceable, and, outside his function, for none to matter.

Lament is useless. Co-operative, municipal, private, all big business became less personal. Up to a point, impersonality is freer and more acceptable. What remains important is that for socially-useful enterprise, doors shall always be open, and that the natural and happy diversities of men shall be used and enjoyed, and not cried down and ruled out.

So I look neither to a co-operative movement extending into a world commonwealth, nor to a reversion into competitive capitalism, nor to any corporative or communist state, but to some reasonably harmonious combination of ownerships and controls, public, group and individual. And I ask for no material design. Rigid buildings are planned and lines of railway and machines. Where the Creator is not, but only the creature, there we can and must devise and fix. But if we worship in spirit and in truth, we discover our plans from within, seeking to give what is wanted, just as the farmer cuts his grass when it is ready and as it has grown, and not as might be planned at home in winter. The good society must grow.

The most to be anticipated is a fulfilment of social values which already are apparent. While upholding the principle of consumers' association, Mrs. Sidney Webb insisted on its limits in respect to such undertakings as the railways. Mitchell's idea of the co-operatives buying up the railways, clearly is impossible; but that is no argument against both road and railway passengers being organised to share in transport control. Public ownership of all great, impersonal, communal necessities is the obvious ownership; but with public utility

companies in charge, with councils, also, of users and workers. For the qualities of authority and of service do not mix. It was a detail not quite insignificant, that when the British railways first were taken over by a government, the then shortage of labour did not prevent a new demand for all season tickets to be shown for examination on all occasions, however familiar the holders might be, and whatever the delays caused. Authority must be exact, and exactness becomes exacting. Municipal libraries are my oldest friends; yet I have found the capitalist lender not only providing a superior range of current books, and cleaner books, but also waiving precise demands for return, and waiving that childish-penal fining system retained by great public lenders even for borrowers who buy their tickets. Municipal amenities might well be brought nearer to their users' control and further from that which also is responsible for the police.

To know the limits of voluntary association may be useful, but appreciation is more cheerful. Churches, clubs, unions, societies—we range from high religion to lowliest sport. Near, through the co-operatives, to the public trust, or, through nursing associations, to private, personal aid, and always close to daily life, for no planned utopia should voluntary societies be deserted. But can any sound social order deliberately encourage individual enterprise for individual gain?

Rents and profits arising not from personal effort but from sites and communal growth, prior establishment, purchased "goodwill," and superior natural increase and fertility, clearly are not proper individual rewards. But if a genuinely personal business maintained by John Smith or other known persons, and not by those who long ago bought a name, proves by its support from consumers, its fair prices and rates of wages (and by its proprietor's known and not excessive income therefrom) that it is socially serviceable, what intolerance it would be to deny it all place and right! Whether informally allowed or automatically registered on proof of present or signed, promised backing, individual working-proprietorships are to be fitted in. Though unable to regulate the competition of rival products within a shop, a municipality or other corporate body will of itself shut out further retailers from a housing estate. This is a usurpation. The consumers, actual or prospective, are those who should decide which businesses are wanted and where. But this means that in place of secrecy, the public must be in a position to know the main business facts.

A modern, post-graduate research worker was received by a famous business chief. In order to supplement co-operative figures

freely given, she enquired about certain costs. The great man smiled. "You are asking for more than we tell our own shareholders!" he said.

Open dealing is something that the consuming public absolutely must demand. Ultimately, in supplying the people, there can be no absolutely private business. Social service must be judged on all the facts, and through disinterested, public criticism and leadership.

V

"If we call a conference," said Dr. Frere to me once, half despairing of ecclesiastical influence, "we only get women and parsons."

That great, feminine part of the nation which is, or used to be, described as "married and unoccupied" is outside boardrooms and trades union offices, but is not outside essential work. On the contrary, the woman at home controls the biggest of all industries. Agriculture, engineering, mining, commerce, is each inferior in extent to the multifarious business of rearing children and caring for the home. The importance arises from more than the cooking, washing, cleaning, mending, training, helping. The life-blood of industry must circulate; and it travels through the purchasing of the housewives in their millions. Bank, employers, workers, housewives, shops, bank: without leaving a township, money will make this round. Economists speak of capital goods and consumers' goods; and forts and engines of war seem far from the shopping basket; nevertheless modern war aims at raw materials and standards of living and ships and factories bridge the way to the ever-ultimate purpose of feeding, clothing and housing those whole peoples upon whom power rests. Women are not, and parsons need not be, negligible.

Through the Industrial Christian Fellowship, the Christian Auxiliary Movement, and similar bodies in this and other countries, organised religion endeavours to influence industry. From outside the linked and federated powers of capital and the similar powers of labour, it conducts a questioning too easily dismissed as uninformed and sentimental. Meanwhile, the rights of enquiry proper to consumers whose lives depend upon the industrial product, and whose purchases to-day are deciding the output of to-morrow—those for whom all industrialists are, properly, no more than agents—are left unclaimed. We hunger for a better social order, and yet we remain children of the separation of consumer and producer—children unable to give to both these vast parties that common purpose which they lack. And without that purpose, the blind lead the blind.

Parsons and housewives, the church and the home, are the main

body excluded from any conscious place in the economic system as we have it. Yet the home is a gentler place than the workshop, and home purposes are nearer to life and more inclusive than any which aim at profit and power, or stop short at providing employment. The executive male regards humanity in the lump. To the business organiser, the children of God are "staff" and "labour." Politicians think of us as the electorate; ministers of state see trades, classes, armies. But to her who has borne it, each child is one, and a sacred one. That blind or crippled member whom industry would at once reject, the mother will tend for months and years, with unceasing care. Fathers, of course, share the same primal impulses; just as peasants, seamen and workers with nature remain truer to the primitive; but with all paid workers the impersonal, labour-dividing world intervenes; whereas the home-keeper continues to deal with us as persons, which we are, individual from birth to death.

Outside the co-operative observatory, I would not have seen these neglected truths; yet it was the subjection of the world to Christian understanding which gave them life and force. Capitalism and Cooperation, since my apprenticeship, alike had enforced the lesson that there can be no sound economy away from the Christianly good, the heavenly, society. The earth is to be accepted as lent from beyond and above man for all the children of men; and the rent to be paid is this: that we direct skill, industry and patience to the service of human needs, as expressed by taught, enfranchised, responsible consumers. The conception implies a place in the service for every worker, and devoted labours reciprocated by consumers' abstinence and fair consideration, and not enjoyed at others' cost. But how are such customers to be translated from such self-regarding customers as those I knew, and what revolution can effect so vast a change?

Some sort of answer I attempted in a small book, *The Consumers' Place in Society*. Historically, I could point to primitive communisms uniting demand and supply. I could indicate enterprise, moral and immoral, breaking through to bigger things. There came conquests, slavery, the empires, and exploitation for riches ruining the conquerors. As the process began again, Christianity in England, in *Piers Plowman*, led the medieval consumers' protest. Before as well as after Robert Owen, besides further outcries, there came the humble, instinctive efforts on record, to reintegrate the consumer and producer. From the first hour of permanent success, as instinctively the movement incorporated all consumers, housewives with them. To its women members the movement gave an organisation of their

own, and a journal; and for the home, in the crisis of 1914-18, it anticipated general rationing, substituting for competition the fairness of rationed supplies at relatively low prices. The goal of this historic movement I saw as the good society.

But so great an end lay far beyond the existing organisation. It lay just as far beyond myself. Yet I thought: perhaps some small stir of mine may communicate itself to others, and some pregnant idea be sent abroad. My opportunity arose after 1926, when trade union solidarity came tragi-comically into conflict with the efforts of co-operative officials and remnants of staffs to feed the workers and their families. The need of consumer understanding became startlingly clear. Supported by my old friends, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, I received directorial backing for a campaign. The twenty-four "Self and Society" essays were written by distinguished people searched out as sympathetic, and published through the house of Ernest Benn; pamphlets were issued, non-commercial advertisements were placed; courses of instruction were organised for co-operative women and co-operative employees; and from conferences of educational workers came that independent action of university heads which created the authoritative text-book, *Consumers' Co-operation in Great Britain*. A luncheon club, incidentally begun to bring national co-operative officials and public men together, proved ironically one of the few of these advances to be lasting and successful.

I wanted a consumers' movement knowing itself to be of and for the home, consciously complementing the half-truths of both employers and employed, and so contributing to the true society. The fact that in this preoccupied world the aim was far too large for the almost negligible driving force behind it, only emphasised the greatness of the need. The peoples have yet to organise themselves understandingly, for the use of the world and for common delight. Within this country alone a thousand wants are, in any organised, comprehensive way, miserably barren. We lack elementary material things: all houses vermin-proof and a national standard of household cleanliness; family allowances, and domestic help within the means of ailing mothers. We have no Ministry or Institute of Uses, reporting for consumers on goods and values. We need roads safe for the young and old, pedestrian by-ways; playgrounds, a freedom of foreshores and moors; open, great woodlands; open-air paddling and bathing pools; fruit trees along the roads; and industrial towns rebuilt to equal Bath, old Tunbridge Wells and the best of Shrewsbury, Salisbury, Winchester. We want clean, smokeless air

where the masses live, and roomier, healthier schools educationally aligned with industry, commerce, and handwork, and a wealth of seaside and hillside camp-schools; and more low-priced means of educational travel. To relieve that inhospitality of our cities which has proved to be so bad for the younger generation, we require not beershops but winter gardens, housing all the arts, with smaller but similar homes of art and joy even in villages. A spirit of service would lead the professions and businesses much further in consulting and working with users, but this we lack, with a thousand things necessary to life in abundance.

While I write everybody is at work, and everybody has wages, and they can purchase, what? Food is short, clothing short, fuel short; common, household utensils are unobtainable; new houses are denied, others are overcrowded; domestic help is denied until sick housewives must rise and work; families are broken up; husbands and wives are separated for years; travel becomes often a torment; recreation, and the means of recreation, and even children's toys, cease. War! But war burdening the workshop so much less than it burdens the home. And after the war? The spirit of irony is here; for the more incalculable the future becomes, the more readily and widely it is planned. But the plans omit many of the consumers' wants, which we can see. How, then, will they succeed in dealing with conditions now hidden from our eyes?

Scepticism, however, is never final. While I write a morning has come sufficient in itself to obliterate any ultimate doubt. Winter is established, yet everywhere is colour. Overhead, a suffused glory; on the grass a mellow, even glow. Scarlet berries catch the radiance, glistening leaves cup the light; jasmine is yellow where the new wood is green; branches reach up, a living brown against the blue. No thrush yet sings; but in the heart the day sings, and not only because of food and a home. More than sensuous, the fine delight is a child's joy living in an ageing man, a joy timeless and super-rational. Hope becomes sure. The picture of a joyous heaven of things is here, existing in minds not of our creation but given in their richness through the universe, from its Maker. That desires so implanted should be incapable of coming to fruit for everybody, either beyond the earth, or on it, or both, is not to be believed.

ON EARTH PEACE

I

"THEN fell the gay Leofwin, laughing even in death." These romantic words are fixed in the memory of the boy that was myself; and how very far away they are! Yielding, perhaps, to an unsuspected, congenital bias toward lost causes, the boy would have died for Saxon Harold. Nevertheless, more often he found it comforting to see war, the tiger, safely locked up in history, and never at large in the England of the eighteen-eighties.

I knew nothing of pacifism. For me, it was a thing unborn. But arms and soldiers were fascinating, like fire to an infant. I flourished a toy pistol; I gazed at guns; I felt an alluring power in a bayonet swinging at a hip. Redcoats of the Leicestershires marched four abreast; and I beside them happily paced and trotted. Or on the spacious turf of the old racecourse, the yeomanry galloped, or the militia formed in line. Or in May sunshine at Tuxford, while I was there, a regiment of hussars from York to London bivouaced in the little and usually empty market place, and this, too, was exciting. And valorous and proud in memory, was the hero of the time, Colonel Burnaby, my boyhood's commanding officer, in his three-quarter-length portrait behind the concert platform at the Leicester Conservative Club.

Soldiers were a little more than men. A June all-night, adolescent's journey to Ireland was sunlit for me by the talk of a merry corporal, in the train and on deck. An officer—and the word rang like a good coin—could be no other than a gentleman. Reading *The Clarion* I grew up with ex-sergeant Blatchford's colonels and generals. Unlike capitalists, these high officers were servants of the nation, and would see justice done to the workers. Later, in Coventry, as I dressed a window, the artillery would clatter past. The Marxian federation to which I now belonged meant to abolish standing armies, but only to set up, instead, a citizen force. *To arms! to arms! ye brave!* Though compiled by the pacifist, Bruce Glasier, our socialist song-book included *The Marseillaise* and we bawled it lustily. Socialism was economic, and its programme of reorganisation for working class benefit did not logically extend to human solidarity and no more war. So at eighteen, without after-

hought, I could accept the column of guns, horses and men, and view it as bringing life and energy to the quiet, old Coventry street.

Another year, and when fifes and drums challenged the London air, and people ran and cheered, I stayed detached. Economic problems already were deepening to one profound question which the weight of human suffering was beginning to press upon me, and the city was awaking a sense of a different duty of man to man. The miles of prison-like, cramped homes, the flashy, noisy public houses, the Sunday morning, second-hand markets, all related to the problem; whereas trumpeting regiments did not.

I left London for the industrial north, and in Huddersfield I exchanged Marxianism for the humanism of the Independent Labour Party. Here, the grind for money shrieked against the spirit of poetry and the hearty, Yorkshire kindness; and, again, the conflict was so much more than economic. Competitive money-making was one form of discordant living, and war was another. War was competition nationalised. And it meant something nearer than a movement in history. It compelled a choice between hiding in the mass or standing out against a conception of life now alien to the spirit and hateful to the mind. I imagined myself training to kill other men, and nature revolted in its depths. This would not be romantic dying. This would be violence against pity, against sympathy, against every sense of human-kind. The meaning of life was still hidden. Man's relation to the universe was yet unguessed. But the human bond already was religiously felt and sacred. For me, even though for no one else, war would be violation.

To a socialist companion I said that I would be shot rather than take part in war. The declaration aroused no argument. My friend simply replied that he, himself, could not go so far. At that time Greece and Turkey were engaged in a now forgotten struggle; but no British participation was in view, and still less in Britain was any form of compulsory military service. Objectively, my statement was pointless. But for me it was a milestone.

In the Harrow road we had talked vaguely of revolutionary barricades; but all that was as dead as the admirations of boyhood. Now I knew myself.

Seventeen years later, in September, 1914, I talked with a young soldier. He spoke of the British retreat from Mons. It was, he said, a mistake. Soldiers are made by the spirit of attack. The commander who thinks first of sparing his men is not a true leader. Even at a high cost, men rally to the officer who attacks. The soldier spoke with animation. The eagerness lit up his healthy, handsome face.

If I forgot everything else, as if war were a forest fire, or a storm at sea, I could enter into the martial words and feel their force. This man, I felt, is a soldier born. I could have wished for him an unquestionable field, suppressing slave-raiding or dacoity, instead of participating with armies of men from civil life in mechanical, international massacres. The gifts and power for action of my acquaintance, I had to recognise. Nevertheless I was I.

Six months afterwards, I watched companies of men who had been my fellow-employees, as they drilled under regular command. Bugles rang; officers cantered across the fresh, green turf; sunshine glinted on the sloped arms of a thousand men; as a game it was lordly indeed. Undenied were the comradeships and vigorous simplicities of the camps; and well I knew the exhilaration of striding forward in company with banners flying. *O sing, marching men!* Though a majority fall, the whole body is more than the part; and the song in which all join is undying, overcoming individual losses, and the forebodings and fears. This I could understand. Camps, marches, battles against floods, famine, deserts, marshes, plague, dirt, were to be greeted with a cheer. But not war.

I heard the argument of a famous Jesuit preacher. War, he said, is no brute contention, no direct concentration upon physical injury. War is the assertion of moral right.

Michael against Satan! The war, no doubt, that each belligerent intends and pretends. But if as an agnostic I had turned against what became an assertion of power, only possibly moral in aim while immediately fatal to right relations, now as a Christian I saw the embodiment of the process of God not so much forbidding war categorically as (in the spirit of Christ's temptation, sermon, rebukes, sacramental service, arrest, trial, death and triumph) leaving it far behind. The Gentiles fight, dominate and judge to execute, but amongst you it shall not be so.

Courage, devotion, uncomplaining endurance—how magnificent! But misdirected—how appalling, how shattering the waste!

When through my resolve I came to know myself, I did not guess that twenty years of war and preparation for war would enforce this lesson.

II

At the time of my decision, the Tolstoyan movement in England had begun, but I knew nothing then of Tolstoy or of the Quakers. The great writer's conquest and occupation of my mind compelled me, later, so to extend my attitude as to include his anarchic non-resistance; but I did so with difficulty.

"The guns spell money's ultimate reason
In letters of lead on the spring hillside."

No, Mr. Spender. Money is only one set of wheels in the social machinery, to be used or abused. In itself, the note in the housewife's purse is as innocent as the tape-measure in her work-basket. And legal enactments serve to define, like the rules in games. On this side, my Tolstoyan rejections were theoretic; whereas my refusal of war was innate. Tolstoy himself was hardly different. Early in *War and Peace* a skirmish is described. On a tranquil, summer morning, in a scene of natural beauty, men fall and are tortured by their wounds. The contrast drives the staff officer, Nevitsky, to exclaim, "If I were Tsar there should be no more war." Here was the protest of the heart continuing in Tolstoy from the spectacle of Sevastopol and from his encounters with Cossacks still earlier. Though I had seen no fighting, this was the dissent I felt.

The South African War of 1899-1902 followed twelve or more British colonial wars and expeditions entered upon by my peace-loving country during my then twenty-four years. It had seemed natural to be of an imperial people, half-familiar with Egypt and the Soudan, Wolseley, Gordon and Kitchener. Now, the South African struggle was more actual; and angry voices might have been expected to interrupt our Tolstoyan preaching of peace. Unaccompanied, two or three of us stood at park gates and in market places; yet from the little crowds that our voices gathered, no stones were thrown nor hecklers violently aroused. It was in the working hours, amidst the clerks in the great co-operative office, that one or another would glance at me with the contemptuous irony of, "Are you British?" Making was relieved; and a lunch-hour chorus of black-coated workers triumphantly sang, *Soldiers of the Queen*. Meanwhile, too ostentatiously perhaps, the sole pacifist present continued in his seat, without removing his hat. But I had followed the war reports day by day, and seven months of it had hardened me.

Faith in a necessity for trial by combat, a faith issuing in humble reliance upon a God of battles, I could have respected. Moreover, my British freedom from enlistment left me only more ready not to disparage any man willingly risking sentient flesh against steel and lead. But popularised war, advertised war, allowed neither credit to the enemy nor modesty toward ourselves. The newspapers told me that Boers were "slim." I learned that, unlike our own men, they never had the courage to come out into the open. They skulked; they shot from behind stones; they abused the Red Cross, they fired on flags of truce; they used soft-nosed bullets, they raided and

pillaged; they tortured negroes; and (except that their women were worse) they were, of all enemies, the most cruel and treacherous. Against such foes, all our actions were right, or, if not technically right, then necessary to our supremely-right purpose.

However, this imperial war, so far from our shores, was opposed by many pro-Boers, and false news sometimes was exposed. I imagined one of those familiar, false bills sending some ardent man flaming to enlist; and I imagined him returning at last, disillusioned and bitter, and then chancing to hear the author of the placard boast of the lie and its utility. But this was invention. Actually, no one was shamed. War continued in its peculiar ways of asserting moral right.

So the South African conflict toughened me against malice, yet not sufficiently. In 1915 I did not question the Bryce Report on atrocities in Belgium; and I did not imagine the operations in Paris of the malicious mendacity factory quoted in Lord Ponsonby's *Falsehood in War-time*. What can arise from war's combinations of wilful hate with willing credulity I discovered much later, chiefly through early volumes of the *Annual Register*. Thus, in the Seven Years War, the French behaved in Germany with "savage cruelty," and their allies, the Austrians, "altered" and "invented" what they called facts; whereas every charge against our ally, the opposing Prussian commander, was "fully overthrown." Thus, the American "rebellion" of 1775 came from an "unhappy and deluded multitude," led by conspirators "professing loyalty while preparing general revolt," and creating "a torrent of violence," even while the British parliament (as the King's speech observed) showed only "moderation and forbearance." Thus in the quite minor war with America in 1812, the British with their American-Indian allies were compelled to retaliate "for the acts of plunder and confiscation committed by the Americans in their invasion of Upper Canada;" for the invaders had burned private houses (150) and driven the inhabitants out "without covering or shelter to the inclemency of a Canadian winter." And thus in the major war with Napoleon it appeared that in St. Domingo the French showed "relentless barbarity," roasting natives at slow fires, or suffocating them with sulphur fumes on ships below deck, the French, meanwhile, behaving with their "accustomed levity and gaiety." Napoleon (it was reported) meant to exterminate the blacks and repopulate the island with white French. But the third Emperor Napoleon became our ally; and in the Crimean War it was "the Slavonian character" which revealed "a considerable tinge of

ferocity." The *Register* remembered and detailed previous Slavonic atrocities by Polish regiments, while recording Russian aggression carried on by means of "hosts of Asiatic barbarians," including a marauding element looking in battle for nothing but plunder." Like the Boers, later, the Russians were described as firing on the white flag, just as they had "murdered" shipwrecked men, so that a First Lord of the Admiralty could find "no particular forbearance due to such an enemy."

War itself, I concluded, is the chief atrocity. Some acts it commits; some the war-mind exaggerates or invents; and always the latter distorts and fatally misleads by hiding its own wrong and parading more than everything of the enemy's. Of actual savagery, Defoe's famous *Tour* gave me an objective account, in that diary of the siege of Colchester, in 1648, which he "had from so good a hand." Englishman fought Englishman; yet the story is of famished, neutral citizens shot at and driven back into a starving town, of cannon in a church steeple and churches destroyed, of bullets declared to be poisoned, of treachery by guides, of falsified news, of country people plundered for food, of chief prisoners shot. An all-British war was conducted amidst that quietening atmosphere which must have arisen from the large neutral element in the population; yet these things were done. Circumstances rather than national character evidently increase or diminish war's cruelties and deceptions.

Officially, and in time unofficially, the South African War ended; and the years wore down the results of the "Khaki Election." In 1906 the new Lib-Lab age began; and thereafter an active number of us continued too busy to think of war. The cost of living rose; town labourers were soon to stand in the streets for their pound a week; agricultural workers were in protest against averages considerably less; anti-sweating exhibitions travelled the country, co-operative married women spoke for a place in the new social insurance plans; the eight-hour working day was coming in. Much more was vocally in demand: the transformation of workhouses; more school meals; more open-air schools; school clinics; nursery schools; health centres; more open-air sanatoria; more garden cities and a larger, popular resettlement on publicly-owned land. Militants and moderates insisted on votes for women; and I joined in, even when the banner I was asked to carry in procession represented—did it?—the Associated Midwives! How greatly were politics to be humanised by the enfranchisement of the excluded sex! None foresaw the general election of 1918, or dreamt of a Hitler collecting votes in millions from German women.

In all these things, friends of mine were busy; yet still there was energy for other aims. Some of us were still more interested in workers' education, as stimulated by Ruskin Hall and by the new tutorial classes, or in the amateur stage and the writing of plays nearer to life as we knew it, or in debates at the Manchester University Settlement. Or we stood to hear Free Trade Hall concerts; or listened from the gallery to Wagner and Rimski-Korsakov via Beecham; or we joined in photography and experiments with colour, or enjoyed group rambling by footpaths and over monopolised moors where keepers had to be avoided, cajoled or defied. The outdoor interests broadening amidst the Lake mountains and increasingly social on the lonely Pennine hills, had created the Co-operative Holidays Association, and were continuing, under the social genius of the original pioneer, T. A. Leonard, to the formation of the democratic Holiday Fellowship.

Beyond all this I found in Manchester a Peace Society; but it was limited, apparently, to a few elderly men growing still more grey with fear of thunders that now merely echoed in the western world; and I returned to affairs that seemed more vital.

Yet the spirit of war was awake, armed and gathering power. That period of detachment which had given Britain moral influence in Europe was gone. There must be allies; and Manchester crowds had run to stare foolishly at the Mikado's sailors marching from Japanese war vessels in the Canal. *Banzai!* these spectators shouted, *Banzai!* There must be allies; and the military understanding with France came, disguised as a popular friendship. The two, old aristocratic imperialisms accommodated each other; and then the solid, populous, upstart German empire made trouble. Agreement was reached; but when rival Great Powers agree, peace shivers. While the new social era went on, so did army reorganisation, and unification of empire forces, and Franco-British military planning. Fear of Russia advancing on India had sounded through my boyhood; and, piping in *Kim*, Kipling had introduced it to the twentieth century. But that other imperialism already covered a sixth of the world; and the danger to the rich was not from the rich. Danger was from the less fortunate, the rude, insurrectionary poor—the poor not too needy to make war. And for the Tsarism that had lost the Yellow Sea, and so nearly had collapsed that Tolstoy could write about *The Russian Revolution*, there were Slavs to be protected in the Balkans, and prestige to be regained.

So the stage was set; and now the orchestra began. The merely descriptive words, *Made in Germany*, struck, now, a sinister note.

British trade was in danger. Britain was in danger. Stories anticipating invasion blared in the cheap press; Blatchford trumpeted. Crowds shouted again, and this time louder, and for battleships. Responsible men declared that the German fleet should be summarily attacked and sunk.

German students in Holiday Fellowship guest houses were happily our friends; German co-operators in conference grasped French and British hands, to us the war-talk was irrelevant. But the very star of the new era, the pro-Boer Lloyd George of the years of opposition, after five years of power now took the stage to threaten hostility. Thereafter, German and Russian strategic railways extended; and aircraft (as I saw) hovered over Lorraine; and in Manchester a little Polish lady told me that the hope for her country was in a European war; and in working-class Paris, away from tourists, I bought a picture post-card combining patriotic symbols and battle scenes with the words, *Nous aurons la Revanche—demain!* And I read translations of *France and the Next War*, and *France Herself Again*. "After Agadir the whole French nation waited impatiently for a declaration of war;" and war would be "inspired by hate and absolute." And *The Times* said of a "Russian reply to Germany" that it was "next door to a mobilisation in time of peace."

Wolf! wolf! Did we not know the cry! There would be conferences. Pull devil, pull baker! But Europe would keep sane. So Balkan wars and the Serajevo shooting left us little disturbed. In 1914, even on the last day of July, Austrian co-operative leaders were in England, negotiating a British, co-operative loan. That even in 1893, Tolstoy had presented an inescapable choice for Europe between disarmament and general war, was a fact that had ceased to weigh upon me. I did not realise that in 1908 the Russians had yielded, and in 1911 the Germans, and that none would now view it as his turn.

III

The fine-weather sky was lazily blue, and the sea under it all untroubled. Jutting rocks slept in the sunshine; the tide, welling in, made no disturbance. Where over the silken sands the clear water sparkled, little children—moving spots of rose-pink, tan and white—paddled and danced. Over all, the August sun shone unhindered. Sea, sands, rocks, green farmlands and distant summits joined with the immense serenity of the sky to offer content and escape from care.

But from this natural playground of an Anglesey shore, anxiously I turned away to buy a paper. Yes! Pandora's box lay open. In

Europe's cornfields, Russians and Germans were shooting and killing. Hastily, a British Neutrality League had been formed.

"To think what can be spent on destruction, when so much is wanted for the children!" The lament came from a mother and one-time elementary teacher. With her husband a master in an industrial, poor district, the wife knew how often public money was needed and how often it was denied. Upon the wide common adjacent to where we stood, there should have been a scholars' holiday camp, and children in thousands along this superb coast. But the money was to go in creating orphans, and in maintaining a blockade that would starve children from their birth.

A brilliant bank-holiday filled the village with people from the farms around, a people sobered if not dazed. Who wanted mankind to reel down into the pit of war? I sent my telegram for neutrality, as the new league advised; and into the swelling, thunderous Niagara that straw was sucked down.

Well, as in 1899 there would be a peace party. But from this tormented holiday I returned to an unrecognisable world. Christians, socialists, liberals, all in crusade! A E. the only *Times* poet not in arms! At last the war to end war! Civilisation now to be triumphant! Life had been for millions narrow, hard, dull and always insecure. What transformation would ensue from bodies snashed and blood spurting amongst the colleges, concert halls, galleries and gardens of Europe? From such a decimation, though I stood alone, I would hope for nothing.

Uncheered by victories derived by newspapers from actual defeats, I passed with everybody of military age into the four-year tunnel. Shapes of dreadful night were there: fears for food; fears of Zeppelins; refugees dismally arriving; street orators roaring for recruits; long hospital trains; grey crowds queueing for margarine in December frost; new profiteers and a new poor; and "single men first" moving in fantastic procession to full conscription. Through the darkness came sad echoes: Warsaw falling; slaughter on the Somme, Verdun; the Dublin executions; submarines and sinkings; voices of hate always, voices of battle always!

Somewhere beyond the mid-way point, there were glimmerings. Germany invited peace. Austria-Hungary wanted peace, America talked of peace. Only the peace-loving belligerents were adamant. Then Russia in revolution demanded peace; international socialists at Stockholm discussed peace; Lord Lansdowne proposed peace. Darkened streets, rising prices, thrusting politicians, more conscription, could not deaden new hope. Strikes increased; Workers' and

Soldiers' Councils came in view; revolution stirred; an end must come. But, said the financial papers cheerfully, continuing their announcements of bonus shares into October, 1918, "peace has not come yet"!

The end came; and on one side of where I lived, blinds were drawn for two sons dead; and on the other side the shell-shocked son forced back to the line after an over-stayed leave, would not return from his asylum, as his brother would not from the grave. The end came; with one man from my office staff blown to bits: a roar, a blinding, searing, killing instant, and that which was noble in reason, is bone, clothes, flesh, burnt and raw, a litter of dirt and death. The end came, with another (whose eyes of doom when he parted from me I can never forget) still missing from the sunken merchant ship to which he had been drafted as gunner. But a third was happy in returning only ill-fed, from a prisoner's duties in a German mine.

So the end came; and one journalist known to me (not myself) would write no more warlike leaders in groaning self-disgust; and the life of another friend, a poison-gas chemist, would now be only moderately shortened; and never again (I believed) would I walk between multitudes of half-dressed people from their beds, almost blocking the long, dusty passages of the London Tubes. Nor would I read again (I trusted) of civilian panic in remote, Balkan ports because of British bombs from the air.

The *Cambridge Magazine* of those years printed a foreign news summary; incidentally, the magazine quoted a parable from Berlin. Human values destroyed on the battlefield rise up to plead with Omnipotence to end mankind. At last comes Sleep, haggard, piteous, and at her story of violation the Almighty, in anger, bids the trumpets be lifted. And then, by official enemies, an act of mercy is performed; and Heaven sees it, and relents.

Kindness did not cease. Englishwomen sent back from Germany after war had begun, testified to it; and, on both sides, prisoners in hospitals testified. There were British efforts for distressed wives and families of interned aliens; and stories of kindnesses between wounded men of different nationalities came from the trenches. Above all, in 1914, Christian civilisation achieved the victory of the spontaneous, common man's Christmas truce. For as long as forty-eight hours in No Man's Land, British and German private soldiers fraternised. "They laughed and joked together," an officer reported, "and drank to one another's health." "The Germans," one private

wrote, "seem to be very nice chaps." This event I could only read about; but I could exchange greetings with one German co-operative friend, and after the war I could have for a colleague a British ex-prisoner who, in martial East Prussia, had left with farewells of goodwill a farmer's family that had become a family of friends. There is need for a history of the spirit of kindness refusing to be killed in war.

Russian followers of Tolstoy were arrested in October, 1914, for declaring that "the Germans are not our enemies," for "the common enemy of us all . . . is the brute in ourselves." For "prejudicing recruiting," they would have been arrested in Britain. Here, however, a No Conscription Fellowship was not illegal; and fifteen months before the Military Service Acts the Fellowship was founded by my then neighbour, the devoted Fenner Brockway. Under the chairmanship of the superfine but fair and just Clifford Allen (afterwards Lord Allen of Hurtwood) I sat on the first committee. Our names appeared in the Manchester press; after which one or two old co-operative colleagues would fail to notice my presence. Until after midnight the committee sat deciding that we "consider human life to be sacred," or defining the position, as members, of engineers whose normal peaceful work had passed over their heads into the production of munitions. To preserve the sacredness, one legally-trained member seriously suggested that we should meet unpopularity by parading with clubs. He got no support; but his fine discrimination between stunning and killing seemed to me an unconsciously apt comment. It was a relationship that I wanted to hold sacred, and not especially our bodily existence.

No industrial conscription, said the trade unions in 1916, and the government promised that men should be only compelled to fight and die, and not to work. So compulsory military service arrived, and with it a problem for the No-Conscription Fellowship. No pacifist conscientiously could accept any removal to military control, or any form of warlike civil work. On that we were all agreed. But what was to be said of food production, and things similar?

Actually, there can be no total war. Children must be cared for, and invalids and the aged; there is a framework of normal, civil existence that must be kept in being. However narrow, there is a margin within which a pacifist minority may reconcile personal and social claims. For myself, though I might reject unreasonable, malicious conditions, I could never say that the bread-labour that

Tolstoy had enjoined must, even during a war, necessarily offend my conscience.

In practice, a two-to-one majority of objectors accepted such work, or went to prison only because it was refused. The other third, however, included leaders declining even innocent services enforced for war, and to facilitate conscription. And their courage was equal to their logic. Men like Clifford Allen (Lord Allen), Brockway and Hudson (now M.P.) were indomitable through years of imprisonment. Furthermore, from the time when in April, 1916, a second, national, no-conscription convention met in London, where a noisy crowd tried to batter into the hall and batter us "conchies" out, loyalty to leaders was reinforced by inverted war sentiment. Obvious courage became an idol demanding no compromise, and no negotiation with the enemy. Well-to-do people, especially, saw heroism in facing violence on parade grounds and then going to gaol, whereas a man of small means surrendering at thirty-five or more an achieved position he might never regain, and becoming a labourer, was to be regarded only as one of the weaker brethren.

When this attitude dominated, taking over the press support that remained, it became urgent to defend the rights of service and establish agreed conditions. Of our pacifist statements, Dr. Frere had written to me that "there is too much about individual rights and not enough about corporate duties." I had agreed. There was a duty as well as a right to work. Knowing how ships, for example, often were manned by middle-aged men weary of being sundered from normal life on shore, I had felt that relief could well come from young men called upon for a limited, compulsory term of merchant service. But the good name of service must not be debased. Trying to impose an "equality of hardship," tribunals were sentencing objectors to heavy work, away from home, at the lowest soldier's pay, all without reckoning the values of army food, clothing and allowances, or giving attention to physical powers. Some men fared tolerably, while others with families were compelled to give to charity all pay over a pound a week, or were averaging at unaccustomed labour only fifteen or eighteen shillings a week. And no agency existed for putting men in touch with fair employers. Every day honest efforts were wasted.

Liverpool and Manchester do not always co-operate; but Liverpool men working in Manchester now joined us in forming a national Alternative Service Guild. J. W. Graham of Dalton Hall (Manchester) had lent his rooms for our initial meeting; and a top-floor,

city office was provided by T. D. Benson, another supporter. After wearing down abuse every day at the Manchester docks, one Liverpool man magnificently gave all his evenings to the employment agency that we at once established. Nationally, the individualism that persists amongst pacifists stood in our way; and our backing remained a distinctly minority backing. Still, we found members in hospitals, in oil works, in dye works, on fruit farms and on other farms scattered over the counties, in vegetable-drying factories, in chocolate works, as cleaners and porters in institutions, as doctors' chauffeurs, and in numbers at the Home Office camps, established at Wakefield and Dartmoor, for men released from prison. Perhaps I am the only person who has held and addressed an open-air mass meeting inside the walls of Wakefield Gaol! At Dartmoor the Home Office Agent was less friendly. I could not even pass the gates. But when, elsewhere, a member in charge of grave-diggers asked for "a cook," and ultimately was officially instructed to meet the train by which A. Cook (from two hundred miles away) would arrive, it was clear that higher authorities were not too high to assist

In and out of Parliament, the Guild discovered friends. We collected some £200; we circulated a monthly news-sheet; we organised meetings and had a London branch, we defeated newspaper spies who came hungry to publish evidence of illegal intent; and after two years of voluntary, unpaid work, there was something to hand over to the larger, joint, pacifist, employment bureau that all too belatedly was at last set up. Yet we fell short. Leading imprisoned pacifists eventually became instruments of prison reform. Alternative descents into the underworld of labour should have produced some equal social gain. That they did not, was a failure for which our little organisation was responsible. In 1919 far too readily it dissolved.

During these years, in my own case I neither hid my refusal of all military action nor my refusal to take up a direction to alternative work that would have meant a resignation of my employment months before my employer's mass claims for others with myself could be decided. Imprisonment, I said, would bring no heavier burden on my home than resignation would have done; for in prison I would still get some sort of maintenance. Perhaps it was through uncovenanted goodwill and an addition of accidental good fortune that, within my own pacifist conditions, I was able to come through.

IV

Silk-hatted, upright, austerely smiling, President Wilson met the gaze of Manchester, as the citizens crowded to the kerbstones and unanimously cheered the peace-maker. Amongst the flock, spending my pennies of political faith, I, too, if not vociferous, looked less grim. The days of the Armistice, of the parading throngs and the singing and dancing in the streets, were two months past. That flood would not burst again; yet a joyous current still flowed in the welcome to Wilson.

We did not guess how the stream was already polluted by the Hang-the-Kaiser election campaign; and we did not foresee that Wilson in Paris would be jockeyed and wearied and sickened, and would betray himself, and descend through failure to paralysis and death.

Some months later the full text of the Versailles Treaty appeared in *The Times*. Steadily I read through those columns of small print. We British were not a herded mob, nor a democracy from overnight. We had elected many governments, and were fresh from authorising another. And it was this high steward which had dictated all these columns in the name of us all. And they were bad. The accumulating weight of them pressed upon me. One witness remembers that I said how evil it was, and how certainly it would not establish that end for which the people had rejoiced, but would give new power to mischief.

In the public interest we allow, even to confessed murderers, a fair defence in open court. But in war there is no counsel for the enemy. The meanest may plaster that general target, and contrary advocacy will be stigmatised and made impossible. If war were simply a contest for survival, false judgments would be no worse than irrelevant. But war is never a duel to the death. Majorities in each country live on and make peace, and just conclusions are therefore essential. Nevertheless we allow a fostered hatred to create for us popular beliefs so one-sided as to be fantastic. Encouraged distortion reacts by crippling, and then all but mortally damaging, ourselves.

To defend the enemy, if not to love him, is the proper task of the church. As the prophet did for Israel, so it is for the church to hold up the mirror to statesmen and people. But after 1914, where and what was the church? The moral stand of the pro-Boers during the South African War sufficed in the end to correct excess and produce a lasting treaty. Had there been in 1914-18 a million equally-skilled and courageous friends of peace, all so free from

hostile intent as not to be afraid of appearing to be pro-enemy, similarly they might have saved Britain. But we were almost united in crazy abuse. The war to end war turned into the war that made war.

To prevent the terrible irony, those of us who were pacifists, even if we had commanded insight and moral power, were altogether too few. And to counterbalance the fatal enmity, nothing larger and deeper arose. If the British Empire had lost a million dead, Germany had lost a million and three-quarters. But no spirit of pity pleaded that sacrifice. None said that as our people were earnest and loyal, so the others had meant to be. No! Further blockade, dictation against our pledged word, the charge of sole guilt used to justify plunder, burdens then upon the vanquished that no victor nation would have accepted for itself: these were what the new, socialist-controlled, German democracy received.

Brest-Litovsk was no defence. Although the Kaiser had no concentration camps, and did not persecute the Jews, we had said that he and his people were Huns. We had said it in our superiority, meaning that what such ravagers did, or might do, could be no example for us. And since our victims were those who had responded to the high principles of Wilson, and had expelled the rulers whom we had called criminals, we could not speak of them as without understanding, and only to be treated as slaves. So I felt that the annexation from the defeated of a million square miles by the already surfeited, the loading by richer peoples of debts upon the already impoverished, the territorial mutilations enforced by this and the further treaties with their vetoes and controls, were acts of violence and worse; for, if passion had spun the plot, what had betrayed us was something meaner and more false within.

While the war was still new, a small crowd gathered in my locality one evening, and gathered with missiles; for it had been said that my branch of the Independent Labour Party intended an open-air meeting for peace. Three persons comprised the local "party" just then; and, quite innocently, all three that evening were away on the hills, discussing Belgium, and for the first time half-accepting the war.

From this mood I was recalled. "We do not," said *The Times* (March 8th, 1915), "set up to be international Don Quixotes." The editorial went on to explain that what we were fighting for, even selfishly, was "our historical policy of the Balance of Power." The same view I was to find later, confirmed at leisure by the historians, Trevelyan and Fisher. As long as England "could keep the nations

of Europe in a state of anarchic equilibrium," Dr. Wingfield-Stratford was to say in 1939, in his *Foundations of British Patriotism*, "she was herself free to expand her island into a world-wide civilisation." So *The Times* could confess that the war would have been fought "even if Germany had scrupulously respected the rights of her small neighbours." Federal America in 1862-6 accepted war to keep that continental area united. Britain contended to maintain Europe's "anarchy of independent sovereignties." But in the new age of the masses how was and is this old, Foreign Office policy to operate? It has served cool, detached aristocrats, dealing with equally crafty foreign kings. Linked to modern, unlimited propaganda, to produce a simple and sincere mass passion, it is forced far beyond any prudent mark.

I am but one of the crowd dragged at the tail of war, but to me this hateful policy is also politically bankrupt. The cost to Europe and the world must outweigh all third-party benefits from British and Dominion liberal standards and administration, so that on balance we are no longer a liberating power; while the increased and increasing task of keeping the Continent divided now lays upon the seventy millions of the scattered British peoples a burden beyond their strength.

So I think; but in 1915 I was content to do no more than read and preserve a Dutch appeal for European federation. The spokesmen of that movement said of the war, "Turn this greatest curse of mankind into a blessing . . . prevent new and still greater calamities!" I read and was one of the many who left the rest undone. Yet after the war I joined the League of Nations Union. The League itself, someone said, was but half a league, yet half a league onward. Hope was that it would become an organ of peaceful change. So, for the League-to-be, I worked with ex-soldiers and fathers of ex-soldiers, while quite otherwise the world went on. Italy turned to Fascism; Turkey forced treaty revision; the Ruhr was invaded, German million-mark bank notes became cheap curiosities, the flaunted poppy of Locarno flowered, as did the fragile Kellogg Pact; Briand so finely talked—"We have had enough of this battlefield glory"—and Stresemann failed and died.

Yet would there not be perhaps a century before another war, a century permitting wrong to be undone? So it was more deeply hopeful to collaborate with the Save the Children movement, and to welcome an ex-enemy foster child. The Viennese girl proved to be Czech by birth; but she had grown up in the cosmopolitan city, and wrote from Vienna in later years, "I could never be nationalistic

like the others." Cheerfully, also, I multiplied the places—Paris, Basel, Prague, Berlin, and others—where, to me, citizens of other countries were by no means all foreigners; and as cheerfully in England, I spent a week amongst friends representing education in thirty nations from California to Iceland and Siam. Going abroad, and in England welcoming visitors from all the world, we private people wove our war-binding strands, trusting they would increase to ten thousand times ten thousand, and then have strength. And, meanwhile, out of the gulf between industrial and agricultural prices, the economic blizzard blew; and world economy failed; and disarmament failed; while autarchy and totalitarianism apparently succeeded.

"There is no hope for Europe," Ramsay MacDonald said privately, in 1932. None the less, the Peace Ballot heaped up its millions of votes, and in a darkest hour the quickly-slandered peace of Munich, like a rocket, gave a moment of glory showering down. How for that moment the landscape seemed transformed, and the gates to disarmament to stand open! There *is* hope for Europe, for her capital cities, lovely, old towns and lands that peasants have so patiently tilled. Indeed, magnificent is the hope for a Europe that will abandon division and the creators of division, to find national good within a federation of Europeans.

V

The League of Nations is now a broken bridge. Where the last arch crumbles, the new revolutionary era seethes below. Streams and counter-streams swirl black and red; and whether the "United Nations" will stretch across it is yet unknown.

At first, even to me, a reformist, the new times came with promise. On a mild autumn afternoon, in a prosaic Manchester tramcar, a newspaper told me of Lenin's victory for peace, land and bread. The newspaper gave it a different character; but it is a poor reader who cannot see through his newspaper. Three war years, stale and sterile, lay behind that November day. By contrast, this news was transfiguring.

But in 1917-18 the new Russia lacked international power. As if nothing had happened, the war in the west went on. War, finally, as civil war, returned to Russia. The new Red Army conquered, and then overturned the co-operative social-democracy of Georgia; and one refugee Georgian leader who came indignantly to many offices, including mine, uselessly protested. Thus was resumed the

Russian imperial march, in the east to Sinkiang and Mongolia, in the west to Bessarabia and the Balkans, and to the Baltic.

During these twenty years I read the official Soviet publications in English which poured into co-operative offices from Moscow—nothing came from the Fascists—and the reports on Russia of delegations and individual travellers. All this news, however, was from rulers and friends of rulers, and at home I had never found such sources sufficient. So to friendly independents, Duranty, Hindus, Bertha Malnick, I added the critics, Chamberlin, Eugene Lyons, André Gide. Tolstoy's daughter, driven out, gave her story in *I Worked for the Soviet*, and what the Countess Alexandra said was more than confirmed by Dr Ammende (*Human Life in Russia*), Andrew Smith, the Tchernavins, Solonevich, Barmine, Gubsky, and others. I talked with returned, critical visitors; and finally I found the essence of every disillusionment concentrated in the story of the simple, exploited, Jew believer in *East of Eden* (from the Yiddish of Singer), and in Koestler's grimly-revealing, psychological study of the Moscow trials, *Darkness at Noon*.

At the end, with this "new civilisation" I felt familiar. Under the one, ultimate, minority control, I saw three Russias. The first was for proletarian believers, and their imitators, and yes men. Communism ("a heresy, but a heresy," T. S. Eliot has said, "is better than nothing") gave them a living aim; and the amplitude of the socialist sixth of the world added opportunities and power. The second Russia was the country of the masses, especially the urban masses, content to live within the bounds fixed for them, and therefore little troubled by secret police, and so regarded and consulted as to find the regime favourable. Here was the advertised sphere for scientific benefits, popular art, and collective betterment. But these two existed under the third Russia, the Russia of the dictatorship ascending through the one, Communist Party to Stalin, an absolutism circumscribing all spiritual and Christian interests amongst the people, while immediately hostile to free personal values, and merciless toward all critical independence.

In the nineteen-twenties, noting the endlessly similar, small houses massed in British industrial towns, a French acquaintance in England suggested that here, and in no other country, was the next base for Marxian Communism. My French observer underestimated British economic divisions; yet he knew how urban Britain so differs from peasant Europe, and how the compactness of an urban, industrial community tends to bridge the many fissures between workers and earnings. The unity is demonstrated in the regard for

Soviet Russia. Members of the Communist Party may be few; but far beyond formal Communism extends that bent and passion of which sympathy with the U.S.S.R. is the glowing core.

The socialism of Keir Hardie and his party members was humanist, pacific and fully democratic. The peoples, to them, were persons, and not social raw material. The persons were to be converted, and physical compulsion would not be needed for conversion to endure. Their creed, therefore, could not be other than parliamentary and gradualist. Time, or the Russian example, or both, has changed all that. There are new democrats who choose to forget the dismissal of the Russian Constituent Assembly and to forgive the much-purged, one-party dictatorship. To them it is of more importance to remember that a successful, socialist revolution did issue from war, did build itself through civil war, and did force world recognition by its armed power. They remember, too, that the British Parliament is omnicompetent, and that a single general election could be made to suffice for turning any violent objectors to revolutionary laws or Orders in Council into rebels against constituted authority. As the Nazis for their different ends borrowed from the Bolsheviks, so an alien technique could be used here.

Thus we have a new Left. Its members generally disavow imperialism; but they are citizens of the world's largest empire, an empire politically undefeated throughout centuries of war, an empire economically contributing to British strength; and while they quote unemployment, most of them are of that great employed majority enjoying a standard of living which averaged in 1939 more than fifty per cent above the comparable German standard—or the French or Scandinavian—and was far above the Italian, Polish or Hungarian. Sure of potential wealth, they also are sure of power from science, machinery and organisation, and while without Christianity they retain the religious passions. At least, whatever blocks their will becomes, to them, satanic

So the new Left not only plans but hates. Hence arose the war-like demands for boycotts of Japanese, Italian, German goods, for the League to act against Japan, for a naval blockade to reinforce the sanctions against Italy, for intervention in Spain, for a military alliance with France and Russia under the name of collective security, and for "calling" Hitler's "bluff." Faith in the new, good fight sent the young men of the International Brigade from London to Spain, and the same passions burned in their admirers, loudly cheering their going or return. It is a faith which defines the sinners it hates; and because of it I had to cease relying upon foreign news in even

the most reputable liberal or labour newspapers and journals; for as facts sometimes showed, and as I sometimes discovered from business sources, the correspondents abroad were, first of all, true believers. Their pens were merely more subtle and selective than swords.

The day after Munich the new Left and the old Right combined, not formally but with full effect. An old and experienced socialist-liberal journalist hardly could swallow his lunch that day for disgust with the peace. "Never was there," he said, "a better cause for war!" "Betrayal!" I heard, and "Selling the Czechs!" and "Letting Russia down!" "If a loss of ten thousand men could have settled it," said an old friend, well known in public life, "I would have chosen war. But God knows how many millions it would have meant!" These things were said at home, and under the influence of Left plus Right, rearmament continued; while bewildered Germans said, "You sign for peace, and then you cry, 'Rearm!'"

From Buda-Pest, after a letter of mine in the *Cooperative News* written to assist in interpreting events following the Munich agreement, a letter came to me from "Hangya"—the short name of the Hungarian farmer's co-operative federation—offering me, on behalf of the Hangya board, "devoted thanks." "It is the first time since the war," wrote the Hangya director and spokesman, "that the question of minorities has been put in the right light." But like the child in Hans Andersen's famous story, I had said nothing except what should have been obvious. Apart from Hungary, and before the crisis, in the same way I had kept in mind the words of an inn-keeper in a former German-Bohemian watering place, a resort isolated from the other German lands and left to die. "Prague has forgotten us," he said, "but Berlin has not forgotten." And when others talked of the "rape" of Austria, and designs on Austrian iron ore, I had remembered the depth and volume of the Viennese cheers for Hitler, as they came over the air, and how the eyes of an Austrian standing with me by the receiving set, had shone then, just as they had shone before at the beauty of Windermere. I did not slight the subsequent story that came to me from Vienna of the cruelties of that same, cheering populace toward the victims of its triumph; but at least I had some idea of the whole truth, which is peace, in place of the half-truths that produce war.

Friendship and truth are the key, and not propaganda and the bomb. British incendiaries and high explosives fall, we say, as an act of surgery. Gangrene is to perish, and wholesome flesh remain! Since each hate-driven and hateful, sudden tempest of hellish blast

and fire is meant utterly to destroy everything near, far beyond all saving nursing, the analogy is not even plausible. Friendship is the key and friendship where we do not wish to be friends. Fresh from reading Ammende or Solonevich, I still wanted every civil contact with Soviet Russia. If Communists could meet us, we could meet them! But friendship with Germany, being evidently more difficult, is more vital. Already, through war, it is not "British civilisation" that extends into Germany but militarism and authoritarianism which develop (however slowly) here. The peoples are too near, too alike, too close in rivalry to live by war. Centuries hence they will be neighbours still. There can be no isolation: it is mutual help or mutual misery. Friends with Russia, in 1917-25 we might have interceded for the victims of the revolution. Friendship with Germany would have given ground for intercessions even more needed. But it is not a choice. The God that made the world and man has laid it upon us to live with the Germans and they with us; for suicide is no alternative.

VI

Old and new, it is the socialist Left which is heir to all the historic movement toward equality and fraternity. Upon the Left falls the duty of defending the poorer people against the rich, and of helping them, internationally as well as nationally, to a more equal state. "Germany is hungry," said a cooperative friend from Prague, early in 1938. "Why do not the rich nations give something? In Africa or somewhere. Why should we give all?" How old is the story of the insurrections of the poor? The robust in need have been all that Shakespeare said of Jack Cade; but stronger has stood the fundamental fact. Violence has been put down; but wisdom and justice, not unaided by fear, have seen that grievances were met. It is the lesson from our reformist history.

Within the nations the principle is now undenied. Between the peoples, with or without socialist help, this human relation waits to be established. Yet without an advance toward equality, the world cannot peaceably go on. Material resources are involved, and standards of living, and still more. The demand is complete, human. Europe is crowded. India and China are less full than Britain, Belgium, Germany, Italy. But we know what space this and other countries possess overseas. Relatively empty, Africa, Australasia, the Americas, Siberia, provide scope, material and spiritual. Whether for gaining or generously or devotedly giving, there is a stage. To

monopolise it, to deny it to others collectively, is to ensure more and more insurrections, rebellions which no military domination can permanently suppress.

Redistribution, Atlantic Charter, programmes of a Labour Party that has forgotten its old, fraternal mission, are schemes of vanity. The hope is that, in the spirit of the catechism, we shall do our international duty. However history has divided each from each, those are our fellows whom God has made most like ourselves. At the Wembley exhibition of 1924-5 the interesting pavilions were not those of the Dominions. They were the Indian, the Burmese, the Hong Kong, the West African. As being unlike us, the other races are good to meet. But the multitude of successful European intermarriages show that the first bond is with our own blood. Not first and last, yet first. Let us bow to this truth of God, and from released spiritual relations will come new functional unions, and from these last the one thing not to stand meanly beside the rivers of blood, a fully-united Europe.

If not a poverty and degradation below that too long suffered by conquered India, there must rise before us a European union not too close to obliterate all national distinctions, yet establishing equal citizenship, equality of rights in all European colonies, free intercommunication, common standards and opportunities, and with all these, secure peace. Deeply hostile to Britain in everything else, an Indian visitor walking over the hills with me in 1915, still valued British rule for one great reason: it had given India its unity. Author of unity where it has suited us, how can we fight against it in Europe? If we are not to be compelled to accept forced bonds, either from nationalism or from international Marxism, we must work for a union that is reasonably free, and is democratic in giving power to the constituent nations in proportion to the millions of their populations.

Again let me say it: race, colour, intermarriage, history, culture, climate, neighbourhood make the peoples of Europe one. Other continents a vast majority of us may never see; but two hours on a steamer will take us into continental Europe. As the Thames is lovely, so, over there, is the Seine. As Derwentwater is noble, so, over there, is the Königssee. Industrial Basel and industrial Stuttgart are fellows to industrial Leicester. Arnhem flowers match with Cambridge lawns; and St Paul's from Shooter's Hill floats in the sunset like St. Peter's from Tivoli. What is it that we have built a new Delhi, if we have destroyed Genoa and Cologne! The round world is clearly one; but if we cannot cease fighting with neighbours

just across the North Sea, what can be the value of kindness toward peoples remote across the oceans? Fraternity nearer home would be more convincing. The scheme of a league of all the nations of all the world was grandiose, and it has failed. Will there be more vitality in the union of territorially-great world powers surrounded by the rest as satellites and obedient subordinates? European wars become world wars. Peace in Europe is the necessary step to world peace. The practical end is European federation; with the way then open to world accord. And what could a Briton wish for his island country more than that she should direct her powers toward making Europe one, and, with that example assisting other federations, bridge east and west in a union of the world.

The aim is outside; the dynamic within. Formal union would not exclude sham equalities, subtle monopolies, and manoeuvres for power to the point of civil war. Union will rest securely only upon a majority of conscious Europeans. Britain is my region; Europe is my country. Are we, then, to be fellows with Fascists? So Protestant once spoke of Catholic. But profound religious divisions have been transcended; and shall the healing spirit stay defeated? That which is in man from God can overpass the political gulfs, also.

European fraternity is of the core of human brotherhood; and it begins now. It begins with every man who will not be less national, provincial and local because, in the black night of Europe's cruellest madness, he still will be European first.

VII

The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me . . . Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine . . . Should I not spare Nineveh, that great city? . . . They shall rest in their beds . . . violence shall no more be heard in the land . . . For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives . . . If thou hadst known . . . the things which belong unto thy peace!

Through a thousand years of Biblical history, folk stories, and lawgiving, the silver cord is not broken nor the golden bowl left empty. Rome is challenged in Jerusalem; but from the national uprising, the heroic war effort, the apostles stand part. *Ye fight and war*, so one speaks to the belligerent, *yet ye have not*. Monks, friars, Lollards, Moravians, Quakers, the Papacy: from the first Christians until to-day there is one continuing line of those from whose aims war is exorcised, as during the Jewish struggle it was from the gospels and epistles.

During five years, at least, I saw shadows of the war machine darkening the British press, so that the third war of my lifetime between this country and Europeans came from the long rearmament openly, and, as "standing up to the dictators," more than half desired. Within the last weeks, summer schools took me to the coasts, south, west, east. English shores still were unbarricaded, English houses undamaged, and English skies untroubled. As secure, apparently as under Victoria, the stretched London suburbs tapered away into Surrey fields and woods. Even on the last day of August, divers at Scarborough sported in the sunshine so warm upon the swimming pool; and families with gleeful children everywhere possessed the sands, enjoying the gentle rippling of the tide over the pool-enclosing, low rocks, and feeling the benediction of the salty, tonic air, fresh from a sea sun-painted in purples, greens and blues. But a newspaper contents-bill appeared on the shore: *Evacuation To-Day. Britain Mobilising*. Next morning I looked down from the cliffs. The entire foreshore lay forlorn, empty, dead. What I saw was the grave of peace.

Soon, elsewhere, a warden came to me, bringing gas masks

He explains the advantage of the alliance with Poland.

"We can drop our bombs," he says, "land in Poland, load again. We make two trips to his one."

"It is all wicked!" I exclaim

"It is," the warden replies "But this man," he adds, "must be stopped."

The old voice of Puritan Britain, the moral overlord, sure of her own righteousness and power!

Propaganda leaps forward; truth retires, nothing is new "Evacuation went without a hitch" (the B.B.C) "Italy has adopted a wise policy of peace" . . . her "historic partnership" with Britain and France will "become increasingly fruitful" . . . "no quarrel has developed between us and Japan" . . . "The whole world is against Hitler" (Prime Minister) "Germany will soon collapse" (Man in the street). Petain, the "guarantee that they shall not pass" (*Times*). Soviet Russia "indistinguishable from her Nazi neighbour" (*Times*). The British Empire, headed by the King, offered to the Soviet Union "any homage that the warmest admiration can pay" (*Times*). Nothing is new; the testimonials to ourselves; the abuse of the enemy; the parades of atrocities; the compulsion of neutrals; the reckless spending and waste; the different justice for enemies and friends; the taking of lands from the poor, the creation of disastrous hate. Frederick of Prussia, Freethinker and ally in 1756, "the

Protestant champion" (*Annual Register*); Stalin, in 1942-3-4, the voice of liberty. From 1704, a "needless prolongation of the war" (Fisher); in 1790, peace rejected with "insolent fatuity" (Fisher); in 1943-5, the devastating tyrant policy of "unconditional surrender." In 1854 "selected news and incitements to hatred" (Trevelyan), and in 1944 the same. Pacifists may err and no great harm be done. But what do we not pay for the ancient errors of all who are slow to end the shedding of blood!

Nothing new—but yes! New to hear in Britain man-made thunders in the clouds, to see the glittering of burst shells, and brilliant stars increasing as planes fall to swift, down-curving flames; and to look on half the sky, citywards, hatefully-beautiful with a long-lasting, rosy glow. New, the flying bomb, newer, the atomic, new, with our compliance, the post-war expulsions and enslavements. Is there nothing fresh and not hateful? Yes, our children and grandchildren, and for them are faith and hope, but only in what is refreshingly to be desired and loved: in a new will for a human kindness that means mutual help and a common order in a world made new.

In 1939, on the first day of September, I talked with one of the most-widely known of English public men

"England," I said, "may be brought down to Jefferies' picture in *After London*."

"Is it possible," was the reply.

"By our own doing," I added.

"People haven't the imagination to see what they do"

"None of us," I said, "*can* imagine this war."

The response came with feeling "Thank God we cannot!"

Yet *fear not: it is the Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom*. Empire, trade, major employment, increasing riches, as the world has given them to us may not be ours again. They may have been ended by our own act as well as by the acts of others. Yet mornings will shine, and children come, and life go on. To suffer is to experience, and the actual still can teach. And heaven is the end and purpose of our being. Even here, to find that true knowledge of our way, and that true relation with other peoples for which we are made, could endow our millions, spiritually and materially, as the world never has endowed us yet. Without rhetoric, soberly, a nation immunised from the deceits of war, and understanding for what life is, and so living, has nothing to fear, and, literally, everything to gain.

MANIFESTO

I. EVERYMAN'S RIDDLE

When the unexpected words, *What are we living for?* came from the table just behind me, in the hotel coffee room at Darlington on that pleasant morning, they came as interesting rather than urgent. The inn was comfortable, the breakfast good, the autumn day sunlit and kind. Above all, after an illness, I was in health again. I was cushioned against care, even philosophic care.

The same morning provided an easy railway journey northward by the sea; and after Edinburgh and Glasgow came a daughter's greetings, in an old home set in its acres above a clear, swift stream. A little later, a few miles to the westward, as if in summer, happily I looked over the whole Firth of Clyde—Ailsa sunlit on the sea, the Arran peaks sharp grey on blue, green Argyll, the brown or snow-tipped Highland bens, and, over these last peaks, a brilliant rainbow which in a picture would have seemed exaggerated and redundant.

Surely, the purpose of life stood declared to accept life and enjoy it!

But on that morning, two-and-a-half years ago, while Darlington lay in peace, overnight ruins in Coventry still burned and crashed. Across the world, a hundred or a thousand towns and cities were to burn and crash, and the old, dying of shock by the thousand, were to be better off than other thousands, the thousands of children permanently maimed. Whatever you and I may feel and do, the question cries out: *What are we living for?*

Six months ago, in a dentist's waiting room, I picked up a magazine. I turned the pages from the back, as I am apt to do; and thus I met at once, and again as unexpectedly, the same puzzle: *What are we born for?* A young airman had written to enquire, not from a philosopher or a priest but from a Member of Parliament. "No nursery tales about God," he said, "will answer." Neither would it help to preach Christian morality. Christianity has ceased. "Look what the Germans did to Rotterdam, and what we did to Cologne!"

"In my heart," the young man continued, "I know the answer."

Courage and comradeship have their moments when life and purpose are one flame. But flames die down; and no passing feeling

satisfies the whole man. We want final, lasting assurance, four-sided and solid, to possess and build on. Of the confident, living generations, which has found it? With all his insight and experience, Somerset Maugham, in *The Summing Up*, can only repeat the burden of his earlier book, *Of Human Bondage*. "There is no reason for life, and life has no meaning." The novelist declares that he believes what other men believe but shrink from saying. In this last statement, is Mr. Maugham wrong? Forced to it, the world confesses that the brave show of its passionate business is an empty show. The emperor is not only without clothes. His very being is without reason.

"The people of the Koyukuk," says Robert Marshall of the Alaskan valley described in *Arctic Village*, "have made for themselves the happiest civilisation of which I have knowledge." They are friendly, free, independent, always self-employed, always sociable, and, in a mountain land extraordinarily beautiful, always they live strong, natural lives. Nevertheless it is in *Arctic Village* that the roadhouse philosopher remarks, "I don't know what's the reason man should come on earth when he got to go and die so soon."

Unless there is reason, ultimate reason, reason as profound as our deepest questioning, life suffers from more than its brevity. The canker is in life itself, and in its brain. Let final meaning go, and the importance of our days is a sham; and the mind knows itself cheated; and feeling starves, and the division in man becomes disease.

Life has no meaning! It comes; it goes; it is less than the mind; it is rationally void!

"What's nothing in the end is nothing now."

But looking in wonder at the universe of being, and remembering the tale of human error, does it not seem more reasonable to believe that instead of life being senseless it is we who have misdirected our search?

2. INSTEAD OF AN ANSWER

To the common riddle, the poet of *The City of Dreadful Night* found no reply; and being simple in honesty he would not deny the task, and put it aside. In his loneliness he accepted his failure, and dwelt with it, faithfully recognising that without answer there is no real truth or joy. Finally, he drowned his misery and died.

Thomson was more sensitive than strong. Other men are tough. Though they have no reason for it, they mean to live. They are not so ingenuous as transparently to invent reasons. Instead, they

take over secular creeds that silence the mind. After this they can live and believe in living. That the watch is not keeping time, or not going, they become too busy to notice.

On the other side, looking within, the seeking man finds instincts even more godlike than reason; and to him it seems practical to ask himself from whence this endowment has come? It may not matter for to-day, and for taking his seat in a bus, but he sees that gradually and before long, the quality of his relations to his fellow-men will be affected by his explanation. So he enquires, and finds mundane nature insufficient. If conscious intelligence has come through evolution, beginning with sunlight acting on water, then mind has arisen from the mindless, which would be equal to something from nothing. It would be creation, attributed not to something more than ourselves but to something less. But that capability and the god-like reason should issue from the inane is a theory less credible than that of any theism; so the seeking man looks beyond nature, and receiving the help which in every study we need, he awakes within himself to what is fresh life. In the odd man, again the fact may not matter. Not everybody uses or is the better for what he finds. But with men of all sorts, let this process continue, and within mankind a heaven will act.

To men unconcerned for what is within, such efforts are waste. They accept the faculties special to man as making the world our own (which it is not) and soon they become absorbed in employing their powers toward any advantage in which they see themselves to have a part. To neglect the inner depths is not always easy. "I am not scared of Jerry," wrote the airman. "I am scared of myself." The unanswered question and all it might involve, troubled him.

From such discomforts there is a common escape. To Richard Jefferies, stricken down, it was bitter to see how nature went on without him. Nature is indifferent; but nature is also non-moral. If we are rash, careless or ignorant, her forces may kill us; but we shall blame ourselves, and not be arraigned and humbled by any being greater and better. Humanity is only more extensive, and not in quality more than ourselves. Heroes and leaders still are mortal. "In the society of my hopes," says a Comrade in *Seven Red Sundays*, "there will be only two crimes: sickness and ignorance." Dealing with men in the mass, we can be similarly unaware and free from spiritual misgivings; for against external nature (temporarily at least) we are superior, and can rule and plan.

Thus it has come about that failure to find an inner, religious meaning in our lives, and an object beyond time and space, has

meant a greater concentration upon that knowledge and those actions which yield power. Power, of course, is no new aim. In the absence of religion, no doubt it can be directly pursued where before it was followed from behind a mask, hypocritically. But this is not all. Still we keep the religious feeling that satisfaction and honour are in living to serve. Wanting other gods, we serve the nation or democracy or the ideal of a classless society. Here, you say, is nothing wrong. To many good ends besides religion, gladly and rightly men have always given their lives. So we might yet, if we proceeded within a larger faith, controlling and qualifying. But practically, there is no such common faith. The lesser ends become absolute. To earth-bound things we give all the realities of service, even unto death. Other religions decline to private cults. God is no longer of public importance. He is replaced by what are, in fact, idolatries.

Christian history often has been far from Christlike; and the Biblical hatred of idols was possibly fanatical. But do we realise what slow, profound, cumulative, age-long damage an idolatry can do? Professing Christianity or indifferent to it, are we not all led away by admiration for the virtues called out? The modern, national state everywhere evokes a wonderful energy, supplies an equal organisation and discipline, awakes courage and endurance, stimulates intelligence, and within the national limits incites to kindness. But when the light is darkness . . . We are far from the last result; yet already we know how complete can be the demand for the subjection of the individual to the state, and how immense and pitiless the mass destruction by the modern state at war can become. Even Britain, within a generation's time, has turned from freedom to conscription and industrial conscription for men and women, and to imprisonments without trial. What may not another century bring! Meanwhile the body of humanity is torn apart, and each part, for all its internal qualities, becomes as a reptile to the other. The airman who said, "I am not scared of Jerry," added, "I am out to exterminate him, like aphids or cancer." The words, we may hope, were unconsidered; but they were read by the Christian apologists who were making reply, and the inherent, deep denial of the Christian truth about mankind was silently passed over. Here was a newest outcome of modern education and state training, and, apparently, no one felt us all to be sliding into a bottomless pit.

In that already-mentioned arresting novel by Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*, the old Bolshevik, Rubashov, is condemned to death; and in his last hours he seeks in himself the meaning not

of life but simply of senseless suffering, suffering outside "biological fatality."

"As a boy he had believed that in working for the Party he would find an answer to all questions of this sort. The work had lasted forty years, and right at the start he had forgotten the question for whose sake he had embarked on it. Now the forty years were over and he returned to the boy's original perplexity. The Party had taken all he had to give and never supplied him with the answer."

Communism is no special thief of souls. Almost the whole modern world is absorbing minds and hearts as well as money, and is returning wealth of no compensating value. Animals simply struggling for survival could not be so deprived. The loss is possible only to spiritual beings, endowed with faculties through which the good, material world could become the instrument of life and joy for all its peoples.

3 MEANING FOR PERSONS

No one, now, will reject organisation and the state, or set out to restore the mediaeval division and conflict of powers; and if he could, none would escape the heritage from science and the control of nature. The utmost goodwill would not replace weights and measures; and objective tests are weights and measures for thought.

The answer that life can make belittles nothing. "One world at a time," said the dying Thoreau to religious comforters; and though we reduce earthly being to a crossing of a bridge, the way in which the pilgrim shows himself on that bridge is no less important. If I was led to Christian understanding, it was through following out my secularism. Say that the human values are only of human concern and have nothing to do with the wonder and beauty of the universe, and you more than half destroy them. But life is a treasure of which I learned to know the real worth; and the knowledge fulfilled the hope that was positive and good in my secularism. Equally it can shine upon the goodness perverted in the idolatry of the world, and assist to deliver men from the frightfulness of twentieth-century superstition.

A Jewish friend, a man whom I honoured for his sincerity and generosity, and whose death was a personal loss, through his knowledge as a qualified specialist in psycho-therapy, had ceased to believe in materialism, dialectic or other. Materialism had oppressed me; but whether egoistically or not I seem never to have doubted the first claim on belief of that centre of integrity, the immaterial "I."

But it was a self forlorn, like a butterfly fluttering helplessly over industrial slums. No wonder I was drawn toward any Shelleyan or Buddhist pantheism, however it set the spiritual against the material and thereby missed the real, the moral contradiction! But for all the virtue of the half-truth in it, pantheism, like materialism, will not do.

Material or spiritual, the universe impresses by its incredible quantity; but for quality, a tubful of pure sea water is as good as an ocean. Because other boys are bigger, a small fellow does not feel humiliated. But when I was at my last school, one lad for his character was honoured before us all; while I, apparently, remained ranked below the average. No discounting of schoolmaster opinion could save me from a quite unmistakable moral discomfort. Such feelings are as real as the steel rails that keep an engine on the track; and it is odd that whereas we should be above fear, to moral shame we cannot, without disaster, even try to be superior. The non-Christian will not deny that after two thousand years of history, Jesus Christ stands out as morally unique. Yet—*Why callest thou me good?* To moral goodness there is no upward limit.

We are much less than dewdrops from a shining sea, much less than sparks from a heavenly fire. We are also much more, for we are complex. We are persons. The modern world becomes more impersonal. Personal considerations tangle up the plans. Nevertheless we are persons. "John Smith" may need to be identified by adding his business and address; but that is only because the name is less single than the reality. The "John" we mean also will be a bundle of contrary feelings and ideas, but the parcel is tied together by that queer, intangible, yet real and responsible unity, the self. Can the author of "Smith" and of innumerable persons equally distinct, be less than his works? We are bound to admit at least an equal self-hood, equally capable of tying contraries together. We are in the presence of a spirit of unity, and one capable of producing more than all the personal goodness known. Without wanting to ascribe sex or lavish capital letters, we must therefore abandon the misleading pronoun of "it," and confess to "He" and "Him."

God as man's shadow on the sky is a caricature. The final reality is that of persons on earth faintly imaging a spirit intensely at one with himself ("holy") and in lovable goodness unimaginably sublime.

Says the boy, Waldo, in Olive Schreiner's famous story, "I hate God! . . . I love Jesus Christ, but I hate God." God had been to me no more than a painted mask on the face of Necessity; and

necessity and love are traditionally at odds. A revolution arrived when I was turned about to see the humanly dearest, which also was most intimate and precious in my thoughts, as coming forth from that same necessity. That which seemed most personally mine was not of me. That the feelings I valued had arisen in many men, in many times, and in many places, I well knew. That was their strength. Now, deeper than the visible evidences, themselves essentially one, was the invisible source. The feelings flowed from the heart—for there was a heart—of “Necessity’s” order and law.

To-day we cannot judge life, condemn evil, be disgusted or revolted, or rejoice in beauty, or be warmed by fellowship, or respond to the lovable, without exercising (though not necessarily rightly) a vitality by no means divine as it is presented by us, yet essentially joining our will to the universally divine. My despair had been that human misery had denied all that stood to me instead of God. Even out of this black shadow, now came the proof of God. Of myself, what did I know of evil or good? Evil was that which the instincts from him within me showed as evil. Evil made so by his will, his life revolting from it; good by his will endowing and impressing it! God not static but dynamic, living and present—dialectically active, if you will! So we reach the absolute; and because we are relative, dependent, created, beyond this the human mind cannot go. We can only join with evil, which is ultimately death, or think, feel, act against evil, which is to live for God.

Contradiction is thus seen with eyes he has given, and for his purpose. Emotionally, dramatically, the restless opposites enforce upon us the reality of his active being. Here is he, at work in man, suffering, loving. That the cruel and horrible should ever have existed is a mystery, but no more so than the mystery of our present existence. One is dark and the other bright (and bright and dark by his will) but in going deeper than we can probe, both are alike. We may question with Omar and the so-much-greater Job; for we are sons and not slaves; and like Job we may protest our proper inheritance, and say the thing that is right. Or we may feel the burden of life to be too heavy, and beg to sleep and die. What we cannot do is to love as the child loves and at the same time hate God; for in the act of loving we join our ends with his, and take his pay.

Truth is complex beyond words; but happily I saw only the elements relevant to my thought. To forget is not to abolish. We to-day are within God’s process. To become conscious of him and his work and adapt ourselves thereto is to find the meaning of life.

Always I had known God, but from outside, as Necessity. Taught to understand him from within, how much richer he and his purpose became! And life, how much simpler!

So far many have come; but to-day there is more. Critical as I might be of John Trevor's declaration of fifty years ago, *God is in the Labour Movement*, in the ancient prayer for the kingdom of heaven on earth I could see an illimitable hope for us ordinary people, whether as users of what the world has left us to use, or as workers, or as individuals forced and despoiled. The door that opened led to all the world, and beyond the world. God is supernatural as, in his lesser kind, man is supernatural. The purpose that can join ordinary, modest daily life to the vision of fraternity on earth, joins both to the undying. In our bodies we decay and die, and must be buried or burned. But God *is*. Relation to him *is*, whether in strength or in physical deprivation, in life or in death.

So far above the material, the mind, as Pascal said, remains so far above love. The three orders are, in C. S. Lewis's word, "discontinuous." Yet to understand the human relation to God is to be convinced of the meaning in life, and so to have thrown open a new door to the way of life.

4. AGNOSTIC CHRISTIANITY

If we in our existence are the evidence of God, the witness is discreditable. Have I not seen how men are lustful for a little power and applause, brave only in company, treacherous to the weak, callous, and governed by envy, and trivial and mean! We are children of the seven sins. It is true that God turns the worst to his purpose. But sin continues, and in the bitterness of plain sin Peter wept, and Saul of Tarsus neither ate nor drank, and Augustine lay naked to himself, his soul on the rack, and Cranmer gave his hand to the flames, and Shakespeare was driven to "the razor's edge." These were alive; what, then, of the dead? Hell is within man, or Judas would not have hanged himself; but how many men, more continuously evil, have felt no remorse? Life is no simple maturing, no smooth, philosophic process.

It is God who reveals good and evil as he would have us feel and know them. Yet how intolerable it would be if light came only from an Olympus, to fall on us below, struggling unhelped! A loving God surely would do so much more! The Christian understanding is that he has done and continues to do so much more. The mystery deepens, but becomes tolerable when we know that

God suffers with us. As he was on the cross, so the Spirit that Christ promised toils, endures and is abased with men. And man's inhumanity is not to man alone.

All this we cannot too often illustrate and say. But to go beyond this, and attempt to explain the ways of God as only God himself could do, is to drive out the lovable truth and bring in notions fit for contempt.

As we men must see it, God appears divided against himself. The stark contradiction, love against evil and death, is a source of energy; but the apologists who revolted my youth explained away, instead of accepting, this spurring of life. I could laugh at them with T. E. Brown:

Aye, the old equation ·
Go it, Justice! Go it, Mercy!
Go it, Douglas! Go it, Percy!

But until Tolstoy cleared the way, I could not find the truth. And new expositors renew the obstruction. A modern style adds attraction to C. S. Lewis's much-read book, *The Problem of Pain*; yet where does he take us if not back to the old anthropomorphism, the old stultifications? "Omnipotence," says Mr. Lewis, "means power to do all that is intrinsically possible." "A society of free souls" without a relatively independent and "inexorable" Nature would be "intrinsically impossible," and therefore "nonsensical." Free-will would be as meaningless, if without the possibility of abuse, fall, and the degradation of man into "a horror to God and to himself." Now, what is this if not the old, deadening confinement within the human circle? "Possible" and "impossible" are words for men, created and dependent as we are. Applied to that Absolute and Uncreated whom we know to exist, but can never condition and fathom, they are terms signifying nothing. God is his own interpreter, and in this connection most certainly "wholly other." That from our littleness we can look out, and know a beyond and a relation to it, is enough.

Hopeless, too, is the theory which explains our present feelings by supposing a past, unverifiable fall. To my young thought, a chief obstacle to faith was the division of the unity of life: the countless hostile units. To-day there is still a difficulty. From disease germ to shark and tiger, every fraction lives ready to destroy another for its own perpetuation. War between nations of men is only discord's last word. Down to the dragons in the slime, is all this welter the product of human self-will? Sin and shame are real; as I felt even as a secularist idolising Bradlaugh, the miracle by which a man

may take general burdens on to his own shoulders, pay others' moral debts, save them from tyranny and suffering, and beget love, is also real. For the saints of the gospels it seems to have been enough that God makes life so. For the rest, we are without knowledge; and the absolute ignorance is as grateful to the spirit as distance is to the eyes.

What the artist leaves out adds value to that which he chooses to put in. God gives us picture and drama, the light and the darkness, the tragedy and its purgation, and requires for these our first attention. Spiritual experience is the centre, ever present, ever knowable. Theories beyond our power to demonstrate, and histories of what we may never return to and test, also are not denied to us. Speak only of intelligent guess-work and the credibility of reports, and no harm is done. But essential Christianity shines the clearer on this earth for the impenetrable mystery all about it; and to attempt to see it otherwise is not to increase, but seriously to weaken, real understanding.

5. THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

When he read some first sketches for this book, Dr. Herbert, the Jewish friend I have spoken of, asked in reply, "Why Christian?" "There are other people," he wrote, "who are also 'body, soul and spirit.' The conclusion that the social order should have relation to the church is untenable."

If goodness can advance better without Christ, it will, and gladly we can then accept the proof. To me, in the world as I know it, there is a clear fact, that to omit Christ is to turn our backs upon a chief part of our needed human inheritance. The gospels are here; and they show an obscure, homeless, little-educated, non-resistant, rejected, flogged and slain provincial so compelling in his loveliness as to be worshipped for the Son of God. All the contradictions of life, they unite and show as one. If there is a dynamic process at all, here is its embodiment and picture. In this story are condensed the conflicts, the inhumanities, the depths, the sublimities. If ever the spirit of God moved in men, here, in the records we have, he shines out. The simplicities and confusions of the authors confirm their time and place, and authenticate their subject's overmastering grandeur. More than any statuesque image of the godlike, here is a central figure of profoundest drama, and where else in any document is there any portrayal for criticism to place beside this one?

Omitting Christ we should be compelled, also, to omit much more. Never did Jesus present himself alone. From the Father

he came, and from the otherwise limiting incarnation, the Spirit of Wholeness would lead the Kingdom on. Nineteenth century agnosticism—"atheism in a top hat"—dismissed Jehovah as an obsolete, tribal god. Now we can see, historically, how easy it has been to parody immanence, and worship innate lust, fear, and cruelty of will. The corrective was, and is, the ancient faith in a God of all nations—being the maker of all men—one, righteous, and eternal. We can follow the first stern conception to its later, Christ-like trend in the prophets. Finally, up to the historic Christ and beyond, we can discover the spirit and truth of the age-long, continuously developing faith preserved by its wholeness from any least possibility of such cheapening as we have seen in D. H. Lawrence's *The Man Who Died*. When plants spring up in our gardens without roots, we may live without what is vital in the past.

The Christian church is a human inheritance. The worse part, the church neither triumphant nor militant, but subservient and compliant, we already suffer. The better patrimony we have to claim and accept. Lambs did prevail against wolves; and through a thousand years, wave on wave of spiritual power arose, flowing from the Christian deeps. In Catholic saints and in Protestant missionaries and social reformers, the old communion and the new have proved the peculiar strength still within each. An ironic friend once proposed a history of nonconformist architecture, in many volumes. Whatever our opinion of Bethels and Ebenezers, I could never deny the creative, developing and healing force which, historically, I have found coming from free churchmanship into British social history. I am also a witness to the loyalty of my Catholic neighbours who crowd the sizable local church on days of obligation when half a dozen other churches of my district are closed or nearly empty. Under the pressure of the new pagan world, Catholic, Anglican and Nonconformist may yet come together, and the church be what it was against the old. To what it was, however, it will not be faithful unless, also, it is made new.

The masses, that were childlike, now are adolescent. They may be less attractive than during the silliest pupilage; but they show a world growing up. In callow rebellion against the ancient guidance, it is a world Fascist, Communist, National Socialist, Democratic Socialist or anything at odds with any religion which begins and ends beyond the earth. The hold which the church has is quite insufficient to make Christianity still the common, accepted faith. At the most it is one competitor, and a lagging competitor, for the modern mind. So much of this mind is untouched, and so little is it in sympathy,

that if the church were ended, and, like Catholicism in Elizabethan England, Christianity had to begin again, it might be a less task. Nevertheless, although the hope is that the spirit of the Friars, the Methodists and the Salvation Army will operate again and again outside and beyond the church, not in these days will faith willingly prejudice its own continuity by going against the church.

The need is in relation to the new mass leaders, young and as yet undistinguished; and it is for a supplement to the devotional church, working with it but equal in its own field, and free to be fresh and unconventional in teaching, witnessing, interceding. Through hard thinking, clear writing, close discussion, and frank debate indoors and out, the ancient faith has to live again. Publishing, illustrating, dramatising, filming, a new society at least would bring to the people the values of Christian biography, history and philosophy, meeting the secular creeds where they are, and relating what is good in them to neglected but more important truth. To be trained for work like this, in my early manhood I would have accepted every discipline. But on the scale necessary, no beginning of such work appeared.

What do we live for? How have others lived? What is the right relation of man to the universe, of man to man, of people to people? What has been done in history? What new forces are now free? For answering, for feeding the young spirit, for enlisting the joy of life, the church in every locality should be the centre. Look round, how much is yet to win! For what waits to be set on fire is not the Thames but the more obstinate will of man.

6. PRIVATE LIVING

"He gives up human life as a riddle without an answer." In his *Reconstruction of Belief*, Bishop Gore thus wrote of Shakespeare, taking Prospero to represent the poet's ultimate mind. All but shattered by the human tragedy, Shakespeare recovered his balance by "refusing to think any more about it."

That life is a great play, but only a play, is the creed of many. You have your part, and fully, joyfully, you live in it. Then falls the curtain; and by and by all comes to dust. Within the play, life assumes meaning, but in reality and off the stage there is none. But this is not to distress you. Laughing at the world, you take any sensible and effective course of benefit to you and yours.

A rebuke to joyless faith is obvious. Whereas religion has driven men into asylums, for a gay acceptance of life no one is shut up. The baby croons in the cradle; the old man wakes refreshed; men

have enjoyed war, and women operations: the worst shadow on the world is sometimes our own. There is reason for supposing that until the religious heaped crosses upon him, the greatest of wedding guests was no man of sorrows. Piety says, "of sinners I am chief."

But:

"Then stooped my guardian angel,
And whispered from behind,
'Vanity, my little man,
You're nothing of the kind.'"

So wrote the poet of pessimism; whereas the laughing philosopher should be the Christian philosopher. My yoke is easy. God made this earth; and every burden beyond our small share we may cast on him.

In another direction, too, the world teaches the faithful Shakespeare buried no talent. Here, the unworldly man possessing nothing that it would be death to hide, is in the graver danger. The social order becomes more and more collective. What can the unit do? The temptation is to live quietly, and not be, vulgarly, all out. Moreover, philosophers have praised the self-effacing life. But Christ condemned it utterly.

Collectivism is the modern word. Amongst very primitive people to-day, as once no doubt amongst all peoples, the individual is merged in the tribe or village community. It may be that on a vast scale we move now to similar incorporations of each in all. It is no less likely that without the assertion of individual qualities more life-giving than the official social order, the progress will be a descent into tyranny. The thousand gifts to society from persons—humanist and educational initiatives, enterprises of kindness, fresh and free ideas, new qualities in literature, art and music, material discoveries and inventions big and little, new applications of knowledge, new ways in housing and domestic life, ultra-official care and helpfulness, have come and do come from spirits who to their good ends could never have been officially directed. Society itself cannot afford not to have open doors through which the unregimented may freely come.

Materially, nothing is simpler than the communism of the barracks. Since some degree of simplified common property must be present in every civilisation, there arises an urge amongst the simple masses to enforce, for all, the simplicities of the life of the soldier. But it is the many who would suffer by exclusions of personal initiative, intelligence and goodwill. These things must be asserted; yet by whom? Not by the self-seeking, nor by the social

conformists. They depend on those whose needle of purpose answers to a magnet invisibly beyond any state and social order. They depend on those whose lives, as against their fellows, are private, yet are invaded and interpenetrated by a spirit larger and wider than all the public affairs of all the public world

Individual power through money is discredited. Personal goodness remains the salt of society. In religious history, especially, first the man of genius, and, after him, personalities of every grade, ever have supplied the creative force. We are single, if not singular. We begin life one by one, and one by one we go out. To know, each of us, for what we live, and that it is for nothing mean, will be to open a new chapter in the story of private good.

7. SEX AND SENSE

Worlds within worlds, but none so suddenly separate and sufficient as that of sex! In Violet Jacob's poem, "Tam i' the Kirk" cannot pray, cannot sing, cannot listen except to passion demanding "Jean, my Jean":

. . . a voice drouns the hale o' the psalms an' the paraphrases
Cryin' 'Jean, Jean, Jean!'

Last week, a mind was sexless, yet busily complete To-day, far off that course, it is driven by a tempest from the blue. Was it not amongst a body of Anglican monks that the special advocate of celibacy was the first of the band to resign and marry!

No real interpretation of life can omit marriage and children; for God is not thought of as an anchorite; and it was not prudence that made this world. Sex is from him Author of the unity of human nature and of its vitalising differences, he animates and he comprehends. At the same time, we have but to glance at history to see how much of it has been made either by celibates, or by men who, for some achievement, have put sex behind them for years at a time.

Pure unselfishness you might think, would bring no more children into the world, to have thrust upon them our cares and diseases; while faith as logically might demand every possible birth, infinitely to increase the inheritors of immortal life. Thus contradiction returns, for understanding to revolve between the poles, like an armature in a dynamo.

I grew up amidst Malthusian nightmares of over-population, and now I live amidst national fears of "race suicide." During my decades, the Victorian-cum-puritan cult of bourgeois marriage, the

revolts of free and independent woman, the sexual anarchisms of Hardy, Ibsen and Strindberg, and the experiments in rationalisation of America and Russia, all have dragged here and there, this way and that, the modern mind. At the end I see, generally, a sober approximation to the oldest Christian attitude towards sex. Christian marriage is bodily union made sacramental by mutual pledges before God. Modern secular marriage returns to the social orderliness of one fixed relation, psychological and physical. Instead of nervous fears for fleeting love, a thousand failures of sympathy become insufficient for dishonouring a deliberate relationship, when it has known wonder and rapture, and in which affection rests upon dedicated loyalty. The troubles of the present world mean, at least, that there are other problems than those between the sexes; and it is something near to the traditional view which most frees the spirit to meet them.

Only trends are to be noticed, but these exist. The Christian does not now sacrifice the mother to the child; and with excessive child-bearing gone, feminist revolt has gone. It is clear that external and economic reforms, like family endowment, may not greatly affect birth-rates; but it is also plain that the state should care for the home, and that child maintenance should be unfairly burdensome to none. It is with contraception, and the licence it gives in marriage and before it, that issue is reached. No longer suspecting every celibate, the Protestant, with the Catholic, sees escape from the obsessions of sex through inward control, and not through assisted surrender. Whatever the medically-justifiable exceptions, the common need is for importing into marriage periods of abstinence. "Are you human?" a young Swede once asked me long ago, when, myself unmarried, I spoke to him of virginity. Mr. Marshall's *Arctic Village* shows how virile people can become celibate and "adapt themselves to such a sweeping transformation." And there is further support. Where municipal posters against venereal disease originally were coldly non-moral, the newer issues, denying the old fallacy of debility resulting from abstinence, now urge and stress the value of continence.

Even when non-religious, lovers still offer a worship of their unknown God, and receive a sense of immortal meaning. For practical purposes, and within the human body, the spiritual man is recognised. Respect for personality grows, and, with that, the fear of the body recedes. Life is enlarged. Young men and women meet, work and make holiday together. Dancing is not a sin, nor is mixed bathing. The body is not kept from light and air; and

the realities of human physical reproduction are neither paraded nor hidden. A Catholic of the standing of the late Eric Gill could defend (each in its place) the nude in art and mixed nudism. Practising a respect for the body as the temple of the spirit, men and women do, to that extent, recover something of innocence and freedom.

Where the French display alcohol in every café, the English, as we know, hide it away. A French hostess in Paris told me that she, believing in temperance, preferred the English method, as causing less temptation. If the body engrosses and intoxicates, we shall want to be kept from it, and live unharmed. Freedom is possible only while we are held up and ruled by the spiritual aim. So it is with celibate living, which liberates a person and widens his field only while the force of purpose absorbs sexual energy into itself. Purpose is the need. Homes have been but should not be narrow. Those were homes which I visited in Charnwood Forest and at Mirfield. and holiday centres, summer schools and cruising ships, even within their secular limits, have suggested possibilities for communal living. But without religious purpose mere joining together means only more dissension

Purpose is not a single strand which can be isolated, and separately used. When, as in war, private and public aims conflict, and the sexes are segregated and couples most unnaturally divided for years together, we know how the work of goodness can be undone. So it is, also, in social life. To assure a livelihood for every woman will not in itself end prostitution; yet overwork plus excess money for men, and spiritual deprivation with under-payment for women, certainly will not assist purity. Sexual life must be gathered up into the meaning of life, or, loose and at large, it will disrupt and debase. And as the church should be the guardian of understanding, so it should serve here. Difficult it is for man or woman always to be self-guiding, and few are the parents or friends gifted to assist! Rarely as a voice from the pulpit may be heard, and small as may be the confidence won for the pastoral office, it is the priests, the parsons, the ministers, from whom should come a trained and delicate public guidance, and in whom should appear a readiness to elucidate privately, for particular persons, the meaning of life here, in the very source of being.

8. LAYMAN'S SCIENCE AND ART

One with the power that binds the universe as one, the Holy Spirit is that which reintegrates over-specialised man. Objectivity essentially divides. From science we pass to a branch, such as

physics, and from physics in general to mathematical or to experimental physics. So J. B. S. Haldane, criticising Sir James Jeans, has pointed out that this astronomer's work has been in a particular field, and that his atomic physics are "mainly second-hand." To this continuous dividing, the world adds its scorn. What is the parson doing in politics, the politician in commerce, the economist in art, the visual artist in absolute music?

Here, life has shown me a double picture. My work made me intimate with a big organisation founded and developed by laymen, and historically I have seen how character comes before technique. At the same time I have had to stand against lay prejudices, and claim respect for special knowledge, aptitudes and study. Experience binds me both to acknowledge that original power which can generate a human aim and keep technicians to it, and to recognise the necessity of interdependent departments and of trained, special ability. The disintegrator in the modern world is not specialisation in itself. It is that negative factor, the absence of a common belief about life's inherent aim. The ship of our world drifts round and round; but it is so vast and various that, lost in our departments, we forget that it is heading nowhere.

Our reason knows that we cannot be satisfied merely with being alive, and that there is an emptiness in knowledge for the sake of knowledge. What is it, by research and skill, to double every ear of wheat, if the crops are to be burned or wasted in war? Truth is one; but what does its unity amount to, if in one continent chemists must labour to get more from a soil already overburdened, while in another vast lands are so politically or economically controlled as, in effect, to be withheld from use? If it cannot lead men to live together without occasion for bitterness and conflict, knowledge is at a dead end; yet how will men unite if they do not feel a unity of purpose in their lives?

The secular prophets tell us that someday the common wish to live will result in a secure plenty, rationally distributed. That was what I believed in, just fifty years ago; but I saw too much for comfort, and time has shown me that in this at least I was not foolish. The same Utopians said then, as they say now, that, all else being settled, art will engage us. Music, pictures, stories, poetry, games, will gladden every life. Now, Tolstoy dismissed aesthetics, and was mistaken. Aesthetic experiment is exciting in itself, and in films, publications, buildings, furnishings, clothes, the gain to the people is, or has been, real enough. Rhythm, pattern, design, colour

are not trifles. But as with one suddenly bereaved, if the essential is not there, how empty the remainder is!

Religious, sexual, social, the great emotions come before the feeling for beauty. Boredom invades the treasure houses and gardens of the rich, so that a picture crazy but new is better than every old delight, and a bloom dull but rare is worth all the roses. Everybody tires. On a wooded cliff above a lovely coast, local, workless men idled on a seat. I praised the scene; but wearily they said: "We see no beauty in it!" Plenty is itself the spoiler. Like a happy landscape introduced into the background of a sincerely religious picture, beauty is meant to be subordinate. Continually regarded by and for itself, it satiates. Art has felt the monotony and revolted; but while artists are no more than specialists, working in isolation from a general aim in life, they can find no lasting substitute.

Neither art, nor science, nor a nation, nor a world of men can live to itself. Health is in serving the whole—but what is the whole? On a secular view, the specialists are right. To see nature, man and history whole is absurdly beyond us. We speak intelligently only when we are freshly and continuously convinced that God is, that his being is the spirit of the whole and holy, and that we in ourselves, as whole men, consciously can relate to him, body, mind and spirit, not through an immeasurable everything but singly from within.

During many centuries, art drew purpose from religion and served churchmen who were laymen in respect to art; and magnificent were the results. In the resurrection of faith, art, for the emotions, and science, for the intellect, may in new service find new life and honour. Both will keep their technique, which is both above and below the laymen. *How* he is to work, the artist will decide, freely. Enough if in stories, pictures, poems, songs, he gives the layman his own true feeling about the common life—his pity, charity, indignation, his confessions and repentances, his sensitive response to the needs for household strength, his honour in work, and his joy in living.

9. THE SOCIAL ORDER

Personally, I owe little to the Manchester School. When Dickens' elephant danced among the chickens, saying "Each for himself and God for us all" I was one of the chicks. Competitive industry took from me all it could get, which was little, and then passed me over, as neither accepted nor cast out. My little success came when I left it. Disinterestedly, therefore, I say my good word for what is concealed by the industrial gloom of East Lancashire and

West Yorkshire. Developing so heavily, the system came in great part from an original, not unneighbourly self-respect. God (it was believed) did more than help the self-helping; and self-improvement did spread some sort of general betterment. Victorian records suggest that the community benefits were real, and encouraging for the hope that endless peace and prosperity would flow from Manchesterian free trade.

For showing the quality of a period as it was currently felt, history is not altogether reliable; for no generation can live in two periods at once. Evident, however, are the past dissatisfactions. Roman cosmopolitan imperialism, medieval feudalism, unrestrained capitalism, all have produced a discontent ready to break through and try again. Each nation, now, is mending or ending internal competition, while the spirit of revolution looks on, promising and threatening. Instead of quiet, evolutionary change, the story oscillates from disillusion and revolt to disillusion again.

Does the world of history go round like the earth, simply from day to night? Or does the spirit of God move in history, and to no vain end? Contradiction again must be resolved into purpose and force. Certainly, there is no paradise on earth. For that illusion, the believer in a real heaven will not exchange his faith. Neither will he trust unduly to any system. Social organisation is always something more than mechanical, yet it takes character from the men it serves. Private business may mean anything from the serviceableness of a neighbourly dealer or the considerateness of an honourable employer to soulless corporative price-maintenance, profit-maintenance and mass exploitation. Similarly, public ownership can extend from undoubted services and real amenities, to possessions held in the public name but controlled to regiment, manipulate and tax the private citizens for party aims and official power. There are many forms under which a well-placed, united few can use a divided and confused many; and there is no device to prevent the noblest dream of socialism descending into the hypocrisy of a totalitarian, servile state.

Spiritual purpose will labour to understand history, and to discriminate between its forces, and see what is fruitful in relation to the life of the people in their homes. Industry is sick because it has lost this relation. It has lost value for the mechanised and standardised worker, who has now forgotten the day when the hand-worker could turn for refreshment from machine to vegetable plot. Obviously there is required a reasonable balance of basic, mechanical production with lighter handicrafts. But still more important is

the healing of the breach with demand and use. We begin to see that action from the consumers' side can best diminish unemployment. We have yet to understand how industry for its health must take the ultimate consumers into open partnership, and join employers and employed in consumers' service.

A sense of purpose strong enough to be applied for the discovery of the forward elements, and cooperation with them, will traverse the systems, and combine all forms of public and private ownership and of producers' and consumers' control. But how far in our time will the people of this land be free to select and choose? Britain which before 1914 possessed reserves sufficient for rebuilding all her factories and factory towns, has spent her power in war. A people grown up to believe that world plenty is always British plenty, must struggle with difficulties which only an equal frugality with industry, discipline and intelligent and patient goodwill, are likely to overcome. I knew the temper of the strikes of 1919, 1921 and 1926; and more acute issues lie ahead. In business, one must sometimes concentrate on a piece of work just to get it out of the way. Similarly, to support for a period any workable system and accepted, peaceable control, may become a whole duty.

God moves in history; but so does anti-God, human or diabolic. Speech, inventions, arts, do grow like a tree, a tree of strength and order and beauty. Good is done, and institutions induce men to act as if they were better than they are; and then national and class fears, jealousies and deceptions, and private lusts overthrow the good. But God moves, and in ways larger than our designs, and reaching beyond our world. Applied nineteen-hundred years ago, our current standards would have shown up Jesus and his first followers as blunderingly inefficient. Rightly, for that time, the successful Josephus hardly noticed them. But what is done for God lives. Not pursuing an arid faith, the understanding man does more than work for his living. He thinks and feels about the common livelihood, and gives himself to anticipate a friendlier and a finer human society. But working for man, he gives for God; and the results that never appear, or appear to pass away, are nevertheless sure.

10. THE CREATION OF PEACE

In September, 1939, I turned to ancient history and Thucydides. It was not escape. War stayed with me; but I placed at a distance of two thousand years those things which to me were folly or crime. Less harsh and grating, then, were the charges and counter-charges, the appeals to fear and the incitements to hate, the self-vindications,

parades and concealments, and all the very modern courses through which the first sea power and first land power of Hellas destroyed each other for the later gain first of Macedonia and then of Rome.

Forcing war upon the neutral island of Melos, the Athenians met the faith of "just men fighting against unjust" by saying: "Of the Gods we believe, and of men we know, that by a necessary law of their nature they rule wherever they can . . . you and everybody else, having the same power as we have, would do the same as we do." Against such gods and such necessity, the poet of *The Trojan Women* set his new and marvellous pity. In this, he was more godlike than the gods.

Euripides against Athens, Isaiah against Moses, the author of Jonah against Samuel, the Suffering Servant of the New Testament against the victorious kings of the Old—once more antithesis! But the oppositeness is not that of negation. The gospels transcend rather than reject war. The poet, the prophets, the apostles follow the spirit that creates peace, and the rest is incidental. So Maximilian and other early Christians loving their neighbours, also would not fight in war; and so St. Francis, unarmed in the Moslem camp, by implication rebuked the violence of the Crusades. A particle of a not dissimilar gentleness I saw in that young colleague who, without holding to any theory about peace, went to his death, willing to be shot at but not to shoot. There can be few people, both simple and sincere, who do not feel this inner incompatibility of "a fellowship of men as men" and war.

We British meet the moral dilemma by claiming to stand for civilisation against crime. *Our* force is to restrain evil, to liberate victims, and punish the guilty. Now, it is to be admitted that Christianity has accepted peace by instalments, often unpaid. Pagan warriors, and Churchmen after them, could not or would not leap forward to Gospel words that were too explicit, and Christians preferred to support those who seemed the least unchristian of opposed fighters. We cast ourselves for that part still. We are the friends of the weak, the guardians of order, the police. The fallacy in the case is that neither feudal conceptions nor civic will hold for national wars.

A police force is an instrument sanctioned by an entire community to assist in administering and where necessary enforcing accepted laws. Enfranchisements, equality of civic rights, means for redressing grievances, have been provided in this country to reduce the element of coercion. But the sovereign nations lack any such union. Between them there is nothing corresponding with a legisla-

ture, courts and police. Each Great Power reserves its sovereign right to be itself prosecutor, jury and judge. Treaties may be broken (as in Hellas) and (as in Hellas) major right pleaded to outweigh confessed wrong. Police abroad wear swords, and armed forces are used against slave-raiding or piracy as police, but police do not fight police. When millions grapple with millions, to speak of "police" and "criminals" is to be either wanting in imagination or in something even more desirable. You may get a criminal to admit wrongdoing; but never can you convince a defeated people that they were all guilty and the others all just.

Given a European federation distributing economic and political power with some equality to all European peoples, and at the same time providing effectively for peaceful change, and war in Europe might again figure as arrest for trial, or an act of healing surgery or a defence of common right. But from so very desirable and necessary a union we are still far away.

War thus remains still utterly at odds with that understanding which honours the love of God and man. But in practice it contrives another and a better excuse. Battles on frontiers usually heighten the comradeship within. The best development of the modern nation-state is toward being a super-family, claiming affection from, and equally showing material responsibility for, all its citizen members. Common service and common sacrifice in war plainly deepen this felt relationship. Good men respond to it, and with their backing, conflict becomes doubly tolerable. On this moral ground, popular movements and the church join with the state. Division of labour then enables international writer, international trade unionist and all the others to combine peace with war; while the padre takes the position symbolised by the slight variation in what would be otherwise a military uniform. But to a soul that is not bemused, this very friendliness makes more terrible the contrasting dark fury of national violence beyond the frontiers.

Moralities ultimately opposite cannot indefinitely co-exist. As moral beings, we cannot, finally, bring under the same moral law a guardianship of this factory and its adjacent homes and a bombing and blasting of that factory and those other homes. As little can we reconcile a feeding of these children and a blockading and starving of those, or a vast brave sacrifice to save this population from miseries of subjection and a determination to inflict similar sufferings on the people over there. Pericles to the Athenians praised vengeance, and the victors in those wars slaughtered their prisoners. The Red Cross speaks of an era which, though too similar, is already

different. But we must either go on or go back. We must extend and organise that peace which begins with a vision of human solidarity felt at heart; or human feeling will die, humanity break up, and nothing visible be left of what was common and universal. Economists say that the internal trade crises, dislocations, losses and unemployments between the wars were the direct results of the severances between the nations. What more subtle and far-reaching calamities will not come if all faith in man's fraternity is lost!

We must not sophisticate or try to smother the contradiction, but meet it in full. War must end—yet it is war which calls out devotion and courage, enforces equity between citizens, puts a new value upon labour and service, destroys prejudices and social superstitions and hastens necessary change. The good is limited and liable to decrease, and the price can become unbearable. But the contradiction means that only through a finer devotion and courage, and a larger equity, can war be abolished; and that if we fail in these, war will return as a scourge fiercer and costlier.

Here arises a challenge which the British Empire and the United States never have met. They will agree to outlaw war. They will, to their credit, respect conscientious objection to war. What they do not show is a desire to end war through a new care for equality between the nations. They do not face the charge that war which defends an inequality of national possessions widely and deeply felt to be unjust, is just as much a return to the jungle as it is to start a war of revolt, in despair of other means of redress.

No people can be peace-loving which, while others are poor, keeps for itself a vastly disproportionate share of land and resources. Equally adult members of the human family will demand something nearer to an equal place. To serve God is to seek peace on earth; and to seek peace with our neighbour, and especially with a neighbour at a similar stage of growth, is to unite and share. In modern terms, we must either federate, on a basis of power in proportion to populations, or find some other comparable way to a common citizenship, so that tolerably equal standards and opportunities may be peacefully spread.

Creative peace, deeper than policies, begins in the soul, which is mind and heart. During war it holds its citadel, patiently. But creation means more than endurance. So we have yet to find the spirit of the monk, Telemachus, and with that power come between the inflamed nations, until they or their sons or their sons' sons bless the makers of peace.

11. EGOCENTRIC?

A genial friend, the late Stanley Jast, wrote a set of light verses about certain old companions, with one stanza beginning:

"When Redfern as a pal of God's
Says so and so is such . . . "

The gay caricature has the right to reduce to its proper carriage anything strutting as oracular. But still we have individual experiences, not of our own making, which we must take seriously.

Ever present at my age, there is the knowledge and the feeling of the streaming away of time. The moment occupied by that last sentence—how finally it has gone! The sense of it, the awareness, is not peculiar. We all share it, but by none is it caused or chosen. Who, then, has set this strange hour-glass within us? We accept it as we accept ourselves; and the voice that speaks has the same authority. *So wonderfully arriving, so unalterably going, so irrecoverable is time: what are you making of it?* Say that it is only the ego, jealous for its days and importance, and still there is more. At the lowest, it is the ego in relation to superior fact. Even by this road we come again to that Otherness which, in ourselves and infinitely beyond, governs us all.

There are further monitors, also general, also personal, also disturbing. They arrive when that satisfaction which is obviously of self is at an ebb. They bring back forgotten deeds, and question these acts in their quality; and when they have gone, the cupboard is left very bare of pride. What they have quoted against me did not trouble me at the time. Self was sufficient. But now, and not by men or by myself, I am placed, and helpless. Is this also of the ego, and deceiving? If so, it is the ego rising above itself, under a power coming unsought. Again, therefore, we escape to what is more.

I stood at the bedside of an old man dying. He turned this way and that, but his restlessness was for nothing visible. He noticed no one present; but uninterruptedly his lips moved in half-audible prayer. Against men as erring as myself, including my friends, I can be confident. That attitude is no use for dying with. And the Power over us, which at this moment makes us conscious that we shall die, tells us so. And we have no answer except to pray. Foreknowledge is a gift to us, apparently unique, and as apparently questionable. It is not what the ego would choose. Self would pray only as the devil quotes scripture; yet if we are dealing with the ego sick, what matters is the attitude, the relation. For the third time

we pass to what is above and beyond, and concerns us all. Not to annihilate self do we live, but to adjust the ego and make it fruitful, if only to the degree of this fragment of understanding. Looking at the seeming moral chaos in nature, man and society, and taking that confused aspect for excuse, self-love, as too well I know, could live cunningly, absorbing pleasure wherever pleasure is available. But discernment knows that in any hour the self may be recalled. Not to be taken unaware, you and I might well follow a ritual. In solitude we could bend to the floor, in recognition of the Absolute, the Creator, in whose hands we live, and before whom, literally, we are nothing. But such prostration would be abject if we did not then lift ourselves so far as to kneel, praying in the words of Christ himself, and then rise to our feet, and stand praying but upright, in token of the freedom of the Spirit. And this ritual would be fanciful and nothing, if there were no sincerity of pledge, no inherent promise to remember God before pleasure and during pleasure

At sixty-nine, again and again I must see the old, or the not-so-old, suffering, wearying, hating death, yet fearing agony and preferring death's opiate. That to die is not to cease, that life and death are both within the rhythm of God, to whom essentially we remain in being, I am sure. Is this the ego merely believing in itself? No! After the pain, the helplessness, the forced abdication, we shall reach the new unknown. So intimidating is it to the self that souls have laboured to persuade themselves, as constantly as Swinburne did, of death's eternity. It is the wonder that the self knows as over and outside the self, that dismisses death. If we cannot love and trust that Wonder, knowing that as we are unfit at death so at birth we were unfit (and yet received), then egoism itself will seek obliteration. But for loveliness, for the lovable, and for love, obliteration is not, and is not felt to be, nor is there any fear of the continuity and its so unknown environment.

"By dint of facing death, by dint of fighting death and repelling it," wrote the Italian surgeon, Professor Majocchi, in his book, *Life and Death*,* "I often find myself pondering over another problem, graver still: what is the purpose of life?" Biologist and philosopher, the surgeon yet found no answer except in the old words: "to know and love God and serve him now and hereafter."

"It seems to me," this old and experienced observer added, "that this is the *word*, the solution, the oracle which subsumes all the wisdom of the world."

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